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The Political Philosophy of Thucydides

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The Political Philosophy of Thucydides

Session 1: no date
Book 1, chapters 33-43

Leo Strauss: Thucydides says the Peloponnesian War is the greatest war, the greatest motion. Motion is understood in contradistinction to rest, and one can say that the distinction between motion and rest is the most comprehensive distinction of which Thucydides makes use. Whether this [distinction of] motion and rest deserves that place, whether there are not other fundamental distinctions of equal importance which Thucydides erroneously does not treat as such, that is a long question which we cannot possibly discuss, surely not at this stage of our understanding of Thucydides.

Now after having proven in this way that the Peloponnesian War is the greatest of all wars and the first, so to speak the first universal war, Thucydides discusses very briefly how he has handled the actions as well as the speeches of the actors. These latter chapters, 22 and 23, have been called by modern scholars the chapters on method, [1]because modern historians believe that a self-respecting historian must have a methodology, and that is hardly the opinion of Thucydides. But what is necessarily going on is to say something about the way in which he has handled the subject matter.

Now there are two points which are of special importance for the work as a whole. Thucydides says that the Athenians compelled the Spartans to wage war against them. Now what does this compulsion mean? Is it, does it justify the Spartans or is it an excuse for the Spartans? What is it? Very much will depend on that, as we will see in the sequel. There is another distinction which Thucydides makes in the introduction, which has something to do with the distinction to which I just referred. Thucydides makes the distinction between the openly proclaimed complaints or causes and the silent pretexts. But *prophaseis*—but pretext has also the meaning of cause, and that this is somewhat ironic . . . pretexts which are much more than pretexts, which are the *true* causes, and what Thucydides will do in the sequel is that he speaks first of the openly proclaimed causes, namely, of the differences, dissensions which gave rise to the Peloponnesian War. And he speaks of that in chapters 24 to 60 or thereabouts, and then only does he begin with the deeper prehistory of the war, and we must see what this distinction means. And we shall not read the whole story of these openly proclaimed causes but only the most impressive part of it. But before we turn to this section, I would like to find out whether you have any point you would like to take up before we go on.

Well, in chapter[s] 24 to 55 Thucydides discusses the first controversy leading up to the war, and that had to do with the city called Corcyra. Corcyra was a city founded by Corinth, a colony of Corinth, and this foundation had taken place[2] according to the ancient law, meaning with the understanding that there are certain duties of loyalty of the colony towards the mother city. And this is part of the story, and one can say this belongs to the sphere of convention, but [3]without the convention the whole story is unintelligible. The Corinthians found Corcyra, and the Corcyraeans in their turn found a city called Epidamnus; and then there begins a civil war within

that Epidamnus, a civil war in which the *demos*, the common people, wins out. The expelled wealthy or powerful people allied themselves with the neighboring barbarians, and the Epidamnian *demos* seeks help in Corcyra but does not get relief from that mother city. Thucydides doesn't explain why—whether the ruling circles in Corcyra were on the side of the expelled rich or powerful people, or whatever it was. Surely Thucydides doesn't say a word as to whether the common people or the powerful people were just in their complaints or not: it's just a common fact that there are civil wars, perhaps especially in colonies, and that is of no use to pass judgment all the time. That seems to be the opinion of Thucydides. Thucydides surely drops the distinction between the common people and the powerful men, and he speaks in the sequel of the Epidamnians as if there had never been any expelled or exiled rich people, perhaps because these expelled people, that the property of the expelled people was confiscated by the *demos* and so there was then no longer[4] a[5] ruling class distinguished from the *demos* in the post-revolutionary diet at Epidamnus. That is not made clear. Apparently not much depends on this.

Now the Epidamnians ask the god in Delphi whether they should hand over the city to the Corinthians, and the god in Delphi says that they should. The Corinthians accept the responsibility and the Corinthians act in accordance with right or justice, so here we have clear judgments of Thucydides as to what is right and wrong: the Corinthians act as decent people do. Thucydides does not suppress, however, the remark that the Corinthians were also prompted by their *hatred* of the Corcyraeans. The Corcyraeans were a rich colony and behaved like *nouveaux riches* toward their mother city—arrogant—and that is not nice, as we all would admit, and Thucydides reminds us of this fact. But whether the Corinthians were—the justice of the cause of the Corinthians was diminished by their resentment of the arrogance of the Corcyraeans, that is not said.

Now there is a point here where we can perhaps usefully consult a commentator. The most recent English commentator on Thucydides is a man called Gomme.[i] He is no longer alive. And he[6] is a very useful commentator in many ways, especially regarding geography and military matters. And he says in regard to chapter 25, paragraph 3: "It is to be noted that Thucydides, who in his introduction is careful to stress political and economic motives should here mention only sentimental ones."[ii] By sentimental he understands considerations of right and justice. One can see what a world separates that commentator from Thucydides: there is no equivalent in Thucydides's language for "quote sentimental unquote." Now this conflict between Epidamnus and Corcyra leads then to a war of Corinth, the mother city *par excellence*, against the Corcyraeans about the possession of Epidamnus. And Thucydides gives great details as to the composition of the expedition sent out from Corinth. He is much more detailed regarding that than regarding the question of right. Perhaps that's easier to answer, how many soldiers and ships are sent than who is right and who is wrong.[7]

Since Corinth is much more powerful than Corcyra, the Corcyraeans are concerned and send ambassadors to Corinth, Spartans among them, in order to bring about a peaceful solution of the conflict. They do not wish to be compelled to align themselves with Athens. That is not developed here by Thucydides. The background of this conflict is this. There is a twofold

[i] Strauss spells Gomme's name.
[ii] A. W. Gomme, *An Historical Commentary on Thucydides* (3 vols.), vol. 1, Introduction and Commentary on Book I (Oxford: Clarendon, 1945), 159.

alliance, hostile alliance: one centered in Athens, and the other centered in Sparta, and Corinth belongs together with Sparta. The second alliance is called the Peloponnesian alliance, the southern Greek alliance, and that is on the whole oligarchic, whereas Athens is the center of democracy.

Now the Corcyraeans are not democrats. There was a democratic revolution, but a revolution of the *demos* but with no democratic intent. It was simply the substitution of one kind of rich people for another kind of rich people, not a democracy.[iii] And now they really wouldn't like to be compelled to be allied with the Athenians, and therefore they try to enlist the help of the Spartans, Sparta being the most powerful ingredient of that southern alliance. But [8]the good intentions are not sufficient. In spite of their unwillingness, of the Corcyraeans' unwillingness to ally themselves with Athens and their unwillingness to engage in a war with Corinth, they are compelled to engage in a naval war with the Corinthians, and in which the Corcyraeans are victorious. That is the first event which could be said to have begun the Peloponnesian War, but not strictly speaking, as Thucydides will make clear in the sequel.

But this naval defeat of the Corinthians had grave consequences. In the year following the naval defeat, the Corinthians prepare a naval expedition against Corcyra. The Corcyraeans try to ally themselves with the Athenians, with whom they don't *like* to ally themselves. The Corinthians in their turn send an embassy of their own to Athens to prevent the formation of the Corcyraean–Corinthian alliance, and from this point there begins the first debate, the first exchange of speeches, what they call today a dialogue between the Corinthians and the Corcyraeans. In paragraph 32, if you will turn to that point, at the end of chapter 31, the last word. Will you read that? And the Corcyraeans said—how does he translate that?

Reader:
The representatives of Corcyra spoke as follows.

LS: No, that is not—"about as follows," "said something of the following kind," *toiade* (τοιάδε), not "said the following things." So Thucydides does not claim that this is a literal rendering of what the Corcyraeans had said in Sparta. And you would see at the end of that speech, at the end of chapter 36, you would see [that] he says: "the Corcyraeans said such like things," and the Corinthians after them, "things like the following ones." So he strongly emphasizes the nonliteral character of the speeches.

We may note another little point. First, the speech of the Corcyraeans will try to win over the Athenians to an alliance with Corcyra. The first word in the Greek, which doesn't come out in

[iii] It is not clear what Strauss means by these assertions, for which there is no basis in Thucydides's text. There is no mention at this stage of the narrative of a democratic revolution in Corcyra. Rather it is striking that, as Strauss notes, Thucydides tells us nothing about the regime then ascendant at Corcyra. The fact that it sides with the oligarchic exiles from Epidamnus against the *demos* ascendant in that city (1.34.6-7, 1.26.3), would suggest that the Corcyraean regime was itself oligarchic, as would the statement that the Corcyraean prisoners later taken by the Corinthians included some of the most influential men there whom the Corinthians hoped to use to bring it over to their side (1.55.1). Subsequently, when these men return to Corcyra they initiate an oligarchic coup (3.70 ff.): by that time then the regime at Corcyra must have been democratic.

the translations, is "just." "Just" it is. In the reply of the Corinthians in the beginning of chapter 37, the first word is "necessary," *anagkaion* (ἀναγκαῖον). This one can say determines the tone and the subject matter: justice is one consideration, necessity is another consideration. Whether the two things always go together is a question, but the emphasis is obviously different whether you start from the justice angle or from the necessity angle, and the politician in the strict sense would be more concerned with necessity and the nice people would be more concerned with justice, but it leads to all kinds of difficulties.

But anticipating later developments, one can say that by this simple device Thucydides indicates the theme of the whole work: what is the relation of right and necessity, of right and compulsion. Sometimes cities are compelled to do things which are not simply just, and here is where—for example, when the Athenians compel the Spartans to wage war: Do they compel the Spartans to do something which is not strictly speaking just? That is a great question which determines the argument of Thucydides's whole history. Now shall we read chapter 32? Please.

Reader:[iv]
"Athenians, in a situation like this, it is right and proper that first of all certain points should be made clear. We have come to ask you for help, but cannot claim that this help is due to us because of any great services we have done to you in the past or on the basis of any existing alliance. We must therefore convince you first that by giving us this help you will be acting in your own interests, or certainly not against your own interests; and then we must show that our gratitude can be depended upon. If on all these points you find our arguments unconvincing, we must not be surprised if our mission ends in failure.

"Now Corcyra has sent us to you in the conviction that in asking for your alliance we can also satisfy you on these points. What has happened is that our policy in the past appears to have been against our own present interests, and at the same time makes it look inconsistent of us to be asking help from you. It certainly looks inconsistent to be coming here to ask for help when in the past we have deliberately avoided all alliances; and it is because of this very policy that we are now left entirely alone to face a war with Corinth. We used to think that our neutrality was a wise thing, since it prevented us being dragged into danger by other people's policies; now we see it clearly as a lack of foresight and as a source of weakness.

"It is certainly true that in the recent naval battle we defeated the Corinthians single-handed. But now they are coming against us with a much greater force drawn from the Peloponnese and from the rest of Hellas. We recognize that, if we have nothing but our own national resources, it is impossible for us to survive, and we—"

LS: And national: of course [an] impossible translation, because they are not nations, the nation of Corinth versus the nation of Corcyra, but *cities*. But still, it is a kind of a journalistic rendering of what Thucydides means and therefore it is easily intelligible, but it is also easily greatly misleading. Yes?

[iv] Here, as throughout the course, the Reader indicates the page of the passage in the Rex Warner translation, published by Penguin. We have omitted these references, as the usual method of citing Thucydides by chapter and section (also used throughout the course) will suffice for the now rarely used Warner version, as well as for all others.

Reader:
"We are therefore forced to ask for assistance, both from you and from everyone else; and it should not be held against us that now we have faced the facts and are reversing our old policy of keeping ourselves to ourselves. There is nothing sinister in our action; we merely recognize that we made a mistake.

"If you grant our request, you will find that in many ways it was a good thing that we made it at this particular time. First of all, you will not be helping aggressors, but people who are the victims of aggression. Secondly—"[v]

LS: Ya. No, wait a moment. So this is the introduction, and that is what they called in former times in rhetoric a *captatio benevolentiae*, the winning of the benevolence of the audience. They have no leg to stand on. They never had any allies, and they had never any foreign relations to speak of, and now they suddenly appear in Athens and ask the Athenians for help. And now they have to explain this away and say [that] this is due not to any low motives but to decency: We don't like to meddle in other people's affairs, and therefore we have no allies. This is true, but this may be stupid, but this is decent. That is the introduction in which they dispose of this objection. And of course we know already from Thucydides's own mouth that the Corcyraeans didn't want to have an alliance, especially with democratic Athens,[vi] and now they are compelled to seek an alliance especially with democratic Athens. And they dispose of this difficulty, and not entirely in a bad manner. They were not antidemocratic, they just were people who did not meddle with other cities, and therefore no connections. Yes? Chapter 33.

Reader:
"If you grant our request, you will find that in many ways it was a good thing that we made it at this particular time. First of all, you will not be helping aggressors, but people who are the victims of aggression. Secondly, we are now in extreme peril, and if you welcome our alliance at this moment you will win our undying gratitude. And then, we are, after you, the greatest naval power in Hellas. You would have paid a lot of money and still have been very grateful to have us on your side. Is it not, then, an extraordinary stroke of good luck for you (and one which will cause heartburning among your enemies) to have us coming over voluntarily into your camp, giving ourselves up to you without involving you in any dangers or any expense? It is a situation where we, whom you are helping, will be grateful to you, the world in general will admire you for your generosity, and you yourselves will be stronger than you were before. There is scarcely a case in history where all these advantages have been available at the same time, nor has it often happened before that a power looking for an alliance can say to those whose help it asks that it can give as much honour and as much security as it will receive.

"In case of war we should obviously be useful to you, but some of you may think that there is no immediate danger of war. Those who think along those lines are deceiving themselves; they do not see the facts that Sparta is frightened of you and wants war, that Corinth is your enemy and is also influential at Sparta. Corinth has attacked us first in order to attack you afterwards. She has

[v] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner (Penguin Books, 1954; revised edition 1972).
[vi] Again, the textual basis for this assertion is unclear.

no wish to make enemies of us both at once and find us standing together against her. What she wants is to get an initial advantage over you in one of two ways—either by destroying our power or forcing us to use it in her interests. But it is our policy to be one move ahead, which is why we want you to accept the alliance which we offer. It is better to have the initiative in these matters—to take our own measures first, rather than be forced to counter the intrigues that are made against us by others." (1.33)

LS: Now the true argument begins. They speak first of the benefits which accrue to the Athenians from the alliance with Corcyra. In the first place, they say that the Athenians show their justice, that they [do not] take the side of, well, what Warner says "the aggressors," [but as Thucydides says], "of those who suffer injustice." The identification of the aggressor with the unjust and the attacked with the just is today very popular, but it is not obviously reasonable. There may be a country which defends itself against unjust attack or may try to overcome an earlier injustice, an earlier loss of territory, by a new war. We must not always think in terms of an atomic war, which is a relatively recent phenomenon and which perhaps makes any war impossible, as some people say. That was surely not the situation in former times. So the aggressor, the man who begins the war, is not necessarily the unjust man: if he tries to get rid of a formerly committed injustice, he may very well be just. So let us not forget this for one moment.

The Athenians show their justice by aligning themselves with the Corcyraeans. [9]However, they use another word for justice: they speak of the virtue of the Athenians, that they show their virtue to the many. It's a popular consideration, in other words. But on the other hand, they establish a claim to gratitude on the part of the Corcyraeans, whom they help. That seems to be—that is also what Gomme would call a sentimental consideration. And now he talks of something else which is not called sentimental, mainly of the enormous increase in Athens' naval power if Athens should ally herself with Corcyra. And the premise of this argument is this. There is a war between the Athenians and the Peloponnesians [that] is coming anyway, and therefore it is important for you Athenians to be as strong as possible and to become the allies of us, the Corcyraeans, who are the third strongest naval power in Greece, the strongest being Athens, the second Corinth, and the third the Corcyraeans. Yes?

Reader:
"If the Corinthians say—"

LS: So that seems to be a practical consideration[10] for the Athenians to ally themselves with Corcyra, but resting of course on the somewhat hypothetical premise that the war will come anyway, [11][and] the Corcyraeans naturally had an interest in asserting this possibility to be a certainty. But can we trust them? Do they know the future? The question which is not decided here. Ya? Chapter 34.

Reader:
"If the Corinthians say that you have no right to receive one of their colonies into your alliance, they should be told that every colony, if it is treated properly, honours its mother city, and only becomes estranged when it has been treated badly."

LS: Ya, when it is treated unjustly.

Reader:
"Colonists are not sent abroad to be the slaves of those who remain behind, but to be their equals. And it is quite clear that Corinth was in the wrong so far as we are concerned. We asked them to settle the affair of Epidamnus by arbitration; but they chose to prosecute their claims by war instead of by a reasonable settlement. Indeed, the way in which they are treating us, their kinsmen, ought to be a warning to you and ought to prevent you from falling into their deceitful traps or listening to what may appear to be their straightforward demands. When one makes concessions to one's enemies, one regrets it afterwards, and the fewer concessions one makes, the safer one is likely to be." (1.34)

LS: Now this is a new kind of the argument, a new *type* of argument. So there is—from the point of view of necessity, one can say there seems to be no question that the Athenians should make an alliance with Corcyra, but the Corcyraeans will say that the Athenians act unjustly in doing so because one must not accept the colonists' offer, a potentially hostile state, as one's allies. And the Corcyraeans reply to that in the manner which we have seen. It's not just for the Athenians to accept the Corcyraeans as allies. And they assert that this is clearly wrong. But this is not precise enough, and therefore they continue this argument in the next chapter. Yes?

Reader:
"It is not a breach of your treaty with Sparta that you receive us into your alliance. We are neutral—"

LS: No, they become now more specific. What would the injustice consist of? There was a covenant between Athens and Sparta, between Athens and Corinth, Corinth and Sparta being allies, a thirty years' peace. And according to that covenant the Athenians were—it was at least doubtful whether the Athenians could accept the Corcyraeans, allies[vii] of the Corinthians, as their allies. Now let us first see what Thucydides has to say on this point. Begin again in chapter 35.

Reader:
"It is not a breach of your treaty with Sparta if you receive us into your alliance. We are neutrals, and it is expressly written down in your treaty that any Hellenic city[viii] which is in this condition is free to ally herself with whichever side it chooses. What is really monstrous is a situation where Corinth can find sailors for her ships both from her own allies and from the rest of Hellas, including in particular your own subjects, while we are shut off from a perfectly legitimate alliance, and indeed from getting help from anywhere: and then, on top of that, they will actually accuse you of behaving illegally if you grant our request. In fact it is we who shall have far greater reasons to complain of you if you are not willing to help us; you will be rejecting us, who are no enemies of yours, in the hour of our peril, and as for the others, who are enemies of yours and are also the aggressors, you will not only be doing nothing to stop them, but will actually be allowing them to build up their strength from the resources of your own empire. Is this right? Surely you ought either to stop them from engaging troops from your own subjects, or else give

[vii] Strauss must have meant to say "enemies of the Corinthians."
[viii] Warner has "state."

us, too, whatever assistance you think proper. Best of all would be for you to receive us in open alliance and help us in that way.

"We have already suggested that such a course would be very much in your own interests. Perhaps the greatest advantage to you is that you can entirely depend on us because your enemies are the same as ours, and strong ones, too, quite capable of doing damage to those who revolt from them." (1.35)

LS: One moment. Now what is the precise issue? Gomme has the following to say to this subject: "This article of the treaty is only mentioned here and in the Corinthian reply in chapter 40. 'Either confederacy may enlarge itself by the acceptance of new members, provided such new members are not states who have broken away from the other confederacy.'" This is the . . . Gomme remarks: "Note the unconscious contradiction with an earlier passage. Corcyra will have it both ways. The war is anyway coming, and this action will not involve a casus belli."[ix] Now I think we have to make a few observations on this. An unconscious contradiction of the Corcyraeans is of course not an unconscious contradiction on the part of Thucydides. He may characterize the Corcyraeans for us by imputing to them a certain contradiction. Secondly, is this a contradiction? Is it a contradiction to say the war will come anyway and this and this action does not involve a *casus belli*? They are two entirely different considerations, it seems. The war may come anyway, but there are various possible *casus belli*, and if a particular action may not be a *casus belli*, then the war may come nevertheless. I don't believe that this is a good analysis of what is going on here. Or what would you say?

Reader: First, don't the Corcyraeans impute the Spartans' intention of starting the war when they say that Sparta is frightened and everyone wants war, so that perhaps in saying that it won't be illegal, they are simply trying to . . . Athens won't be responsible for the war in accepting Corcyra as an ally.

LS: Ya, apparently that did play a role for most people, whether beginning the war is legal or not legal. That is presupposed to this part of the argument. In other words, the people were not so unscrupulous to say that it does not make any difference to us whether the war is legal or not, it is expedient for us and therefore we'll do it. Most people, or a considerable part of the audience, was swayed by considerations of justice; and justice means here more specifically: Is this compatible with a preceding covenant . . .[x] the fact that she [sc. Corcyra] is a colony of Corinth does not make her *ipso facto* an ally of Corinth or of Sparta. But this question of justice and injustice is quite important, but it is not the *only* important factor. And that comes out in the next chapter, in chapter 36. Yes?

Reader:
"Some of you may admit that we have shown that the alliance would be in your interests, and yet may still feel apprehensive about a breach of your treaty with Sparta. Those who think in this way should remember—"

[ix] Gomme, 169.
[x] The tape skips at this point.

LS: In other words, they say it is unjust but expedient. Ya? And therefore they must say—now they have to show that it is expedient, regardless of whether it is just or unjust. Yes?

Reader:
"Those who think in this way should remember that, whether you feel apprehensive or not, you will certainly have become stronger, and that this fact will make your enemies think twice before attacking you; whereas if you reject us, however confident you may feel, you will in fact be the weaker for it, and consequently less likely to be treated with respect by a strong enemy. Remember, too, that your decision is going to affect Athens just as much as Corcyra. At the moment your thoughts are on the coming war—a war, in fact, which has almost broken out already. Certainly you will not be showing very much foresight for your own city if, at this time, you are in two minds whether to have on your side a power like Corcyra, whose friendship can be so valuable and whose hostility so dangerous to you. Apart from all other advantages, Corcyra lies in an excellent position on the coastal route to Italy and Sicily, and is thus able to prevent naval reinforcements coming to the Peloponnese from there, or going from the Peloponnese to those countries.

"The whole thing can be put very shortly, and these few words will give you the gist of the whole argument why you should not abandon us. There are three considerable naval powers in Hellas—Athens, Corcyra, and Corinth. If Corinth gets control of us first and you allow our navy to be united with hers, you will have to fight against the combined fleets of Corcyra and the Peloponnese. But if you receive us into your alliance, you will enter upon the war with our ships as well as your own." (1.35)

LS: This is in a way the *strongest* argument—in a way—from a somewhat unprincipled point of view. The consideration of the useful, of the expedient, speaks strongly in favor of the alliance of Athens with Corcyra. So that is the argument for this case. Now we will hear the opposite in the next speech, in the speech of the Corinthians replying to the Corcyraeans. Well, I noted before that the speech of the Corcyraeans begins with the word *dikaion*, "just," and the speech of the Corinthians begins with the word *anankaion*, "necessary" or "compulsory." But that could conceivably be merely ironical that the Corinthians, who are more decent people, speak more of necessity and the Corcyraeans, who are rather crooked, speak more of justice. There are more cases of this kind in Thucydides, but it is not necessary to assume that. It may very well be that Thucydides uses the occasion of the first debate occurring in his work for drawing our attention to this conflict between the consideration of justice on the one hand and necessity on the other, and so we should keep this in mind as the guiding theme of the whole book. It is not improperly emphasized, because the words occur just—they just happen to be the first words of these two speeches, and one can easily overlook that, but one can also pay attention to it. There is no police which watches us whether we observe these little differences or not, but maybe it says something more important than the police, which forces us to watch these little differences. Ya. Now let's see what the Corinthians say.

Reader:
"After the speech from the Corcyraean side, the representative from Corinth spoke about as follows."

LS: By the way, in the text of course it is not the representatives, but the "Corinthians." It goes without saying that a single man spoke first for Corcyra and then for Corinth, but that is—Thucydides dramatizes that, making the plural into a singular.[xi] The Corinthians speak, but it is a single speaker, just as the Corcyraeans are a single speaker. Yes?

Reader:
"These Corcyraeans have not confined their argument to the question of whether or not you should accept their alliance. They have named us as aggressors and have stated that they are the victims of an unjust war. Before, therefore, we go on to the rest of our argument, we must deal first with these two points. Our aim will be to give you a clear idea of what exactly we are claiming from you, and to show that there are good reasons why you should reject the appeal of Corcyra."

"'Wisdom' and 'Moderation' are the words used by Corcyra in describing her old policy of avoiding alliances."

LS: Meaning they don't meddle. They are not busybodies. They are just people who live for themselves, and therefore they are neutral. And now the Corinthians give them—tell the Athenians what to think of these nice people.

Reader:
"In fact the motives were entirely evil, and there was nothing good about them at all. She wanted no allies because her actions were wrong, and she was ashamed of calling in others to witness her own misdoings. The geographical situation of Corcyra gives its inhabitants a certain independence. The ships of other states are forced to put in to their harbours much more often than Corcyraean ships visit the harbours of other states. So in cases where a Corcyraean has been guilty of injuring some other national, the Corcyraeans are themselves their own judges, and there is no question of having the case tried by independent judges appointed by treaty. So this neutrality of theirs, which sounds so innocent, was in fact a disguise adopted not to preserve them from having to share in the wrong-doings of others, but in order to give them a perfectly free hand to do wrong themselves, making away with other people's property by force, when they are strong enough, cheating them, whenever they can manage to do so, and enjoying their gains without any vestige of shame. Yet if they really were the honourable people they pretend to be, this very independence of theirs would have given them the best possible opportunity of showing their good qualities and their relation to common justice.

"In fact, they have—" (1.37)

LS: This is the reply to the *captatio benevolentiae*, to the claim and to the intent of the Corcyraeans to show [that] their neutrality is due to simple decency. And the Corinthians say: No, it is due to a very clever and despicable dishonesty. And now they come to the substantive argument in the sequel.

Reader:

[xi] Strauss evidently meant "making the singular into a plural."

"In fact they have not acted honourably either towards us or towards anyone else. Though they are colonists of ours, they have never been loyal to us and are now at war with us. They were not sent out in the first place, they say, to be ill treated. And we say that we did not found colonies in order to be insulted by them, but rather to retain our leadership and be treated with proper respect. At all events our other colonies do respect us, and indeed they treat us with great affection. It is obvious, then, that, if the majority are pleased with us, Corcyra can have no good reason for being the only one that is dissatisfied; and that we are not making war unreasonably, but only as a result of exceptional provocation. Even if we were making a mistake, the right thing would be for them to give in to us, and then it would be a disgrace to us if we failed to respect so reasonable an attitude. As it is, their arrogance and the confidence they feel in their wealth have made them act improperly towards us on numerous occasions, and in particular with regard to Epidamnus, which belongs to us. When this place was in distress, they took no steps towards bringing it under their control; but as soon as we came to relieve it, they forcibly took possession of it and still hold it."

Continue?

LS: Ya.

Reader:
"They actually say that they were prepared in the first place to submit the matter to arbitration. The phrase is meaningless when used by someone who has already stolen an advantage and makes the offer from a safe position; it should only be used when, before opening hostilities, one puts oneself on a real and not an artificial level with one's enemies. And in their case there was no mention of this excellent idea of arbitration before they started to besiege Epidamnus; they only brought the word forward when they began to think that we were not going to let them have their own way.

"And now, being in the wrong themselves over Epidamnus, they have come to you and are asking you not so much for alliance as for complicity in their crime. They are asking you to welcome them at a time when they are at war with us." (1.38-39)

LS: Ya. It seems clear, the argument. The Corcyraeans are men of notorious injustice, *hybris* in general, and in the affair of Epidamnus in particular. And there is no question that they tried active[ly] in that matter, as just people would, [to] submit to arbitration. This has simply started hostilities before even trying any arbitration. Yes?

Reader:
"What they should have done is to have approached you in the days when they were really secure, not at this present moment, when they have wronged us but when danger threatens them. Under the present circumstances you will be giving aid to people who never gave you a share in their power, and you will force us to hold you equally responsible with them, although you took no part in their misdeeds. Surely, if they expect you to join fortunes with them now, they should have shared their power with you in the past.

"We have shown, I think, that we have good reasons for complaint, and that the conduct of Corcyra has been both violent and grasping. Next we should like you to understand that it would not be right or just for you to receive them as allies. Though there may be a clause in the treaty stating that any city not included in the original agreement is free to join whichever side it likes, this cannot refer to cases where the object of joining an alliance is to injure other powers; it cannot refer to a case where a city is only looking for security because it is in revolt, and where the result of accepting its alliance, if one looks at the matter dispassionately, will be, not peace, but war. And this is what may well happen to you, if you will not take our advice. You would not only be helping them, but making war on us, who are bound to you by treaty. If you join them in attacking us, we shall be forced to defend ourselves against you as well as against them.

"The right course, surely, is either for you to preserve a strict neutrality or else to join us against them. At least you have treaty obligations towards Corinth, whereas you have never even had a peace treaty with Corcyra. What you ought not to do is to establish a precedent by which a power may receive into its alliance the revolted subjects of another power. At the time when Samos revolted from you and when the Peloponnesian states were divided on the the question whether to help them or not, we were not one of those who voted against you; on the contrary, we openly opposed the others and said that every power should have the right to control its own allies. Now, if you are going to welcome and assist people who have done wrong to us, you will find just as many of your own people coming over to our side, and you will be establishing a precedent that is likely to harm you even more than us. All this we have a perfect right to claim from you by Hellenic law and custom. We should like also to give you some advice and to mention that we have some title to your gratitude. We are not enemies who are going to attack you, and we are not on such friendly terms that such services are quite normal. We say, therefore, that the time has come for you to repay us for what we did for you in the past.

"You were short of warships when you were fighting Aegina, just before the Persian invasion. Corinth then gave you twenty ships. As a result of this act of kindness you were able to conquer Aegina, and as a result of our other good turn to you, when we prevented the Peloponnesian states from helping Samos, you were able to punish that island. And these acts of ours were done at critical periods, periods when people are very apt to turn on their enemies and disregard every other consideration except victory. At such times people regard even former enemies as their friends, so long as they are on their side, and even genuine friends as their enemies, if they stand in their way; in fact their overmastering desire for victory makes them neglect their own best interests."

LS: So in other words, Corinth has always behaved decently, nobly toward Athens, and this conduct should be a model for the Athenians to imitate now that the shoe is on the other foot. And the example they give is Aegina, shortly before the Persian War and Samos after the Persian War. Yes?

Reader:
"We should like you to think carefully over these points; we should like your young men to ask their elders about them, and for you to decide that you ought to behave towards us as we have behaved towards you. Do not think: 'the Corinthians are quite right in what they say, but in the event of war all of this is not in their interest.' It is generally the best policy to make the fewest

errors of judgement, and you must remember that, though Corcyra is trying to frighten you into doing wrong by this idea of a coming war, there is no certainty that a war will come. You may think that Corinth will be your enemy in the future, but it is not worth your while to be carried away by this idea and to make open enemies of us now. A much wiser course would be to remove the suspicions which we already feel towards you in connection with Megara." (1.39-42)

LS: Megara, that is of course not explained here, that will come up later. That was one of the more immediate causes of war, the so-called Megarian Decree, of which we will hear later. Yes?

Reader:
"And you will find that an act of kindness done at the right moment has a power to dispel old grievances quite out of proportion to the act itself.

"Do not be influenced by the fact that they are offering you a great naval alliance. The power that deals fairly with its equals finds a truer security than the one which is hurried into snatching some apparent but dangerous advantage. We ourselves are now in the position that you were in at the same time when, during the discussions at Sparta, we laid down the principle that every power should have the right to punish its own allies. We claim that you should uphold this principle, and since our vote helped you then, you should not injure us now by voting against us. No, you should deal with us as we have dealt with you, and you should be conscious that we are in one of those critical situations where real friendship is to be gained from helping us and real hostility from opposing us. Do not go against us by receiving these Corcyraeans into your alliance. Do not aid and abet them in their crimes. Thus you will be acting as you ought to act, and at the same time you will be making the wisest decision in your own interests."

This was the speech of the Corinthian delegation. (1.42-43)

LS: Ya. "About this." Ya? We must emphasize that there are very few cases in which Thucydides quotes literally either speeches or documents, [which] must be considered very carefully, because Thucydides was not a modern historian who liked to quote documents. But when he quotes documents, say, peace treaties, literally, then this is a kind of—this is an artistic act on his part and must be understood as such. So here the Corinthians end fundamentally as the Corcyraeans end: with a bang. The purely political and military consideration may very well be decisive, especially for the younger generation, those who have no experience of war, and this is also something which we do not perhaps immediately understand from our experience. We have seen that the younger generation is more opposed to war than the older generation, generally speaking. But truly in former times, and certainly in the Peloponnesian War, the characteristic thing was that there was a young generation which hadn't gone through a war and therefore was eager for this "quote experience," and therefore they, the Corinthians, appeal to the older men, that they should tell the younger people what they can tell them on the basis of their experience.

So this is the first debate, the first debate occurring in Thucydides, the Corcyraean debate in Athens. And the Athenian replies, the intra-Athenian debate, is not given by Thucydides. For some reason, which we must try to guess, Thucydides doesn't give it. There must have been a difference of opinion in Athens, some in favor of the alliance with Corcyra and some opposed to it, but he doesn't give it to us. What we learn from him is only this: that first they simply turned

it down, turned the proposal of the Corcyraeans down, and then on the second day they made a defensive alliance, meaning if Corcyra is attacked, they help Corcyra, but if Corcyra attacks, then Athens is not bound by that.

For some reason Thucydides seems to wish to postpone the appearance of Athens on the stage for a later date. The next great debate, which he prepares from now on, is in Sparta, where the Corinthians and the other enemies of Athens try to persuade Sparta to begin war against Athens. And there are Athenians who happen to be there, not sent by Athens, not commissioned by the city of Athens, but the Athenians inform—knowledgeable Athenians [12]who defend the case of Athens, but they are not official representatives of Athens.[xii] And then thereafter, when the Peloponnesians have decided, have resolved on the war, there takes place a debate in Athens, and there Athens appears on the stage. And no debate, [but] only one speaker, Pericles. That's the way in which Thucydides handles these things, and I think these few examples suffice to show that this is not history as in this way of the so-called scientific historian. Thucydides makes us see through his narrative, and the speeches are parts of the narrative. What happened in these critical years? And we must observe that carefully: Athens and debates in Athens play a very great role in Thucydides's work. There is only one case, if I am not mistaken—no, I think there is no case in which Spartans come to Athens and have a debate in Athens. There are Spartan embassies sent to Athens to state the case for Sparta, but no Spartan speeches.[xiii] The Spartans were famous for their brevity of speech. Thucydides imitates that in the Spartans. The Athenians were famous as lovers of speeches, long speeches. Thucydides imitates this. And so these little facts I think are sufficient to show the freedom of which Thucydides avails himself in presenting the Peloponnesian War, and what he claims is that this freedom—this from our modern point of view unforgivable freedom—is a greater compulsion to the truth, by the truth, than what we modern historians do when we quote chapter and verse in the footnotes. And this is a question which everyone must consider, whether he is a historian or not: What is the right view of the historical truth, the Thucydidean view or the view of the scientific historian?

Student: But you call freedom, freedom. This is the poetic license, and poetic license gives more insight into the truth of the speech sometimes than—

LS: Perhaps one shouldn't call it poetic license. Perhaps this is a very licentious view of license. Pardon?

Same Student: . . .

LS: Ya, this is what I think, I fear what Thucydides would say.

Same Student: Yeah, but what they actually meant is that the constructed speeches, what should be said by the men about whom he speaks actually, in a way, making up—

[xii] Contrary to Strauss's suggestion here, Thucydides describes these Athenians as a *presbeia* or embassy, thus implying that they were official representatives of Athens, while specifying that they were present in Sparta on other business (*peri allōn parousa)*.

[xiii] Strauss here overlooks the Spartan embassy to Athens at 4.1.7-21 and the speech that it delivers in those chapters.

LS: Ya, ya.

Same Student: Yeah. In other words, it's poetry. It's poetry!

LS: Ya, but what is poetry?

Same Student: More broader use than history, and therefore it gives us a better insight than actually . . .

LS: Ya, I would suggest this formulation of the problem. For the modern historian, it goes without saying, and quite reasonably so, that the modern historian is a man who sits at the feet of the great actors, say, of Napoleon or Bismarck, to say nothing of Eisenhower or Kennedy. Ya? Whereas [13]Thucydides, without anything which could possibly be called impudence, or to use a nice Hebrew word, chutzpa, thinks that he is really a better judge of political and military matters than *Pericles*; and therefore when he writes a Periclean speech, that is a *better* speech, more revealing of Pericles than any speech which Pericles could possibly have given. In the case of the most famous Periclean speech, the funeral speech, he happened to know because Aristotle quotes it, a line from that speech, where he says that the effect of a war on a nation or a city is as if the spring has been taken out of the year. Ya? A very beautiful sentence, you must admit. Thucydides does not use that. Thucydides cannot do much better than that.[xiv]

Student: . . . these two speeches, they may be very well judged as concrete a place or situation, but yet they struck as very generous, something as could have happened in embassies before First World War, Second World War, just now with Vietnam. The situation is of general judgment of what is just, what is—

LS: Not quite!

Same Student: No?

LS: For example, the famous policy of Pericles that Athens can win the war if she limits herself to defending her empire and does not engage in adventures trying to enlarge her empire. That is—and the reason given for that because—

Same Student: This is concrete. But Thucydides says himself that this war was in one sentence . . . it's practically gives the whole judgment of the whole situation himself. He says this war was, in my opinion, that everything which is—

LS: Ya, but that was—

Same Student: . . . war was inevitable. This is a judgment. This is a judgment of what—

LS: This is hard to *say*. Thucydides never says so.

[xiv] It is generally held that this famous trope of Pericles cited by Aristotle at *Rhetoric* 1411a2–4 originated not in the funeral speech reproduced by Thucydides but in an earlier one pronounced by Pericles over the fallen in the Samian War of 439 BCE.

Same Student: No, he says—this is the sentence which struck me more than anything else. In the translation (I can only use the translation), he says: "but the . . . they have against each other and in specific instances where there . . . but the real reason for the war is in my opinon more . . . was the growth of Athenian power . . .

LS: Ya, but—

Same Student: It is a general view. That is what strikes me.

LS: Ya, that doesn't—

Same Student: . . .

LS: Ya, but that is very hard to say, because in Sparta there was a conflict of opinion. There were people like the king Archidamus, whose speech is given in the sequel, who thought the war could be avoided if Sparta does not believe the enemy propaganda of Corinth. And it is very hard to say, and there is a Spartan ephor, Sthenelaidas—a very unpleasant demagogue, to draw any inferences from his style, the style of his speech—who decides the issue in favor of the declaration of war in a demagogic manner. In what sense was this necessary? Thucydides does not say. He only says [that] fear was the deepest motive—not spoken of, hardly spoken of but very powerful. That is, I think Thucydides would say: Sure, war will come from time to time. There is a kind of necessity for that; a young generation which does not know war except from history books and epic poetry, or novels or what have you, but he describes it as the situation was in 431 at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War. There were two generations who had not as a whole engaged in war. They itched for war—that happens, and those of you who would remember 1914, as I do, know that this was the situation in 1914. The whole of Europe, at least fifty percent of Europe, was eager for a war. Of course they had all kinds of reasons, but deeper than all these reasons was a kind of [sense] that somehow just as disease belongs to health, death belongs to life, war belongs to peace.

Same Student: I am struck not by that, whether it is right or wrong, and how. I am struck by this general judgment which would be proper in the modern approach to history, where we look to entire events, and where we see inevitably—it is always a mistake to say "inevitable," but modern historians, looking to the First World War, may say it was inevitable because of Germany, Russia, and so forth. Or now somebody, somewhere—well, somebody who sees in future, so to say, may say: War between China and Russia—inevitable. This was inevitable, which means, in modern history the insight of who, the understanding of not events, not changes, but who . . . struck me here . . . and that's what I don't understand . . . And the repetition of this same position in the practical, the best speech was . . . and much more, much more, not just, but much more convincing a way from the point of view . . . from the point of view of what happens in general way before the war starts.

LS: The war was—

Same Student: Before the war starts, all these chancellors,[xv] where they talking about it. Embassies . . .

LS: The war was possible. The war was possible.

Same Student: . . . We don't know exactly.

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: . . . think very strange. He himself takes the position of looking at the whole inevitable . . .

LS: No, I think, as I understand it, Thucydides—when you analyze it you will find all kinds of causes, more or less superficial, but the deepest cause you will find is the increase in Athens' power, frightening Sparta and making Sparta willing to stop Athens as long as there is time. And you cannot go beyond that. Whether this was necessary, that there should be a war of some kind, he doesn't decide. I believe he implies there would have come a war of one kind or another, perhaps not between Athens and Sparta, but between other countries.

I remember when I was very young, in my early twenties, and I read in Spinoza, in his critique of the Old Testament, he says of the improbabilities in the Old Testament: there is a period of sixty years—I forgot which—in which there was no war. That's absolutely impossible. Sixty years without war sounded . . . And that was the view in former times. I would be the first to admit that owing to what originally was sheer ideology but what has become very factual and massive, it looks sometimes as if a war—from now on a war is unprofitable from every point of view. And then that means, for all people who are not Hitlers, war is no longer a paying proposition. That would be a fantastic change which has no precedent in earlier times. It was prepared by such men like Kant, who spoke of perpetual peace, and some other men of this kind, but still it had no political importance in Kant's time, because when Kant wrote "On Perpetual Peace" [it] was the day before Napoleon and therefore rather absurd, but today it's different. But I have prevented Mr. Kass from . . .

Mr. Kass: Just very briefly, your comment on the speech of the Corinthians emphasized the conclusion when they are discussing the matter of alliance and power. Yet almost the whole of the speech up to that point seems to emphasize rather matters of justice and law, and putting yourself in the other fellow's place, and they don't really, the Corinthians don't really dispute the claim of the Corcyraeans that this is the expedient, except in a higher sense, expedient for the Athenians to accept them. Thucydides's comment afterwards, as to the theme to explain why it was that the Athenians did choose an alliance, emphasizes exclusively the military and narrowly political advantages. Would you say that somehow Thucydides sets up here a certain picture of Athens as choosing the necessary or the expedient over the just?

LS: Yes, something of this kind, I believe, was in Thucydides's mind. There is the discussion of this fundamental question in the so-called Melian dialogue, where the Athenians discuss with the inhabitants of the small island Melos whether the Melians should give in to Athenian demands

[xv] "Chancellors" is uncertain here.

because Athens is so much more powerful than Melos. And the point which the Athenians make, that is one of the most awful statements ever written: The weak have no choice but to give in to the strong. And in a way that seems to be the empirical fact. Whether this empirical consideration is exhaustive is of course still the question. It's a long, long question. But one thing I think we can believe: there can be no doubt that this question of the complicated relation of justice and necessity is the thread which holds the whole book together.

Student: I have a question, if there's time.

LS: Please! Ya. This must be the last question.

Same Student: When you compare war and peace with—[xvi]

[xvi] The tape ends at this point.

Session 2: no date

Book 1, chapters 44-89

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —what one can say superficially, the superficial causes of the Peloponnesian War, and that is first that regarding Corcyra, and then that regarding Potidaea. And we read last time the discussion regarding Corcyra, at least the largest part of it. Now this distinction between the superficial and the profound cause of the war overlaps with the distinction between the question of right, of keeping or breaking contract on the one hand, and the question of necessity or compulsion affecting the belligerents. And keeping this in mind we will read a few more passages which we haven't discussed last time regarding the Corcyraean affair. Let us turn to chapter 44. There, after he has told us what kind of things the Corinthians said in Athens, complaining about the Corcyraeans, he goes on as follows. Chapter 44.

Reader:
The Athenians, after listening to both sides, discused the matter at two assemblies. At the first of these, opinion seemed to incline in favour of the Corinthian arguments, but at the second there was a change, and they decided on entering into some kind of alliance with Corcyra. This was not to be a total alliance involving the two parties in any war which either of them might have on hand; for the Athenians realized that if Corcyra required them to join in an attack on Corinth, that would constitute a breach of their treaty with the Peloponnese. Instead the alliance was to be of a defensive character and would only operate if Athens or Corcyra or any of their allies were attacked from outside.

LS: So in other words, a kind of compromise in which the Athenians thought they would have the best of two worlds, but the consequence was nevertheless that there was a naval battle into which the Athenians were drawn, and of which Thucydides says, at the end of these things, that this was the true beginning of the war. Now when he describes that naval battle in hapter 44—no, I'm sorry, 49. We might perhaps read that [in] chapter 49.

Reader:
Then, after the signals had been hoisted on both sides, they joined battle. The fighting was of a somewhat old-fashioned kind, since they were still behindhand in naval matters—

LS: Why does he say "somewhat old-fashioned"? That's mitigating it. Thucydides simply says "old-fashioned," but that is apparently too harsh an expression for Mr. Warner's delicate ears. But we have to listen to, learn to listen to Thucydides. Yes?

Reader:
The fighting was of a somewhat old-fashioned kind, since they were still behindhand in naval matters, both sides having numbers of hoplites aboard their ships, together with archers and javelin throwers. But the fighting was hard enough, in spite of the lack of skill shown: indeed, it was more like a battle on land than a naval engagement. When the ships came into collision it was difficult for them to break away clear, because of the number engaged and of their close formation. In fact both sides relied more for victory on their hoplites, who were on the decks and

who fought a regular pitched battle there while the ships remained motionless. No one attempted the maneuver of encirclement; in fact it was a battle where courage and sheer strength played a greater part than scientific methods.

LS: No, scientific, no: spiritedness and strength. They fought rather with spirit and strength than with knowledge of science. In other words, the true principles of naval warfare were not yet known. So we see here that Thucydides makes here use of this notion of a progress which has taken place in the fifth century, of which he had made such a great use in the so-called Archaeology, in the general description of what happened between the Persian [War] and the Peloponnesian War. Yes. And at the end of this chapter, in the last paragraph, if you would read that. Yes?

Reader:
The right of the Corinthian law—

LS: No, when the Athenians saw the Corcyraeans.

Reader: Right.
And now the Athenians, seeing that the Corcyraeans were in difficulties, began to support them more openly. At first they refrained from actually ramming any Corinthian ship; but finally, when there was no doubt about the defeat and the Corinthians were still pressing on, there came a point where everyone joined in and nothing was barred. Thus a situation inevitably came about where Corinthians and Athenians were openly fighting with each other.

LS: Ya, what he translates "inevitably" is in the Greek "necessity," "compulsion." So the situation is so that it is no longer in the hands of the Athenians whether they want to fight against the Corinthians or not. They are in a situation in which they are compelled to fight with them, and that makes it very difficult to judge who is right and who is wrong because necessity enters. Now we need only one more passage, in 55, paragraph 2. "Corcyra."

Reader: All right.
So Corcyra remained undefeated in her war with Corinth and the Athenian fleet left the island. But this gave Corinth her first cause for war against Athens, the reason being that Athens had fought against her with Corcyra although the peace treaty was still in force. (1.55)

LS: Ya. So in a way the battle is a naval battle, in which only ten Athenian ships were involved, [and this] was the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. Now this is the end of Thucydides's account of the Corcyraean affair. And now we come to the Potidaean affair in [chapter] 56. But the situation is a bit more complicated here because Potidaea—Corcyra was a Corinthian colony; Potidaea was originally an Athenian colony, but in both cases Athens got into conflict with Corinth because the Potidaeans were allies of the Corinthians, just as the Corcyraeans were.[i] And

[i] Strauss is doubly in error here: as Thucydides specifies in 1.56, Potidea was a colony of Corinth but a treaty ally of Athens—nor had Corcyra ever been such an ally of Corinth, but merely its colony and under no treaty obligations to it. Strauss will correct the first of these errors a few lines further on, and does not repeat the second anywhere else in his lectures.

here the main point here is not any military action but a debate, a debate in Sparta. We turn to chapter 66. Ya?

Reader:
Both the Athenians and the Peloponnesians had already grounds of complaint against each other. The grievance of Corinth was that the Athenians were besieging her own colony of Potidaea, with Corinthians and other Peloponnesians in the place: Athens, on the other hand, had her own grievances against the Peloponnesians; they had supported the revolt of a city which was in alliance with her and which paid her tribute, and they had openly joined the Potidaeans in fighting against her. In spite of this, the truce was still in force and war had not yet broken out. What had been done so far had been done on the private initiative of Corinth.

Now, however, Corinth brought matters into the open. Potidaea was under blockade, some of her own citizens were inside, and she feared that the place might be lost. She therefore immediately urged the allies to send delegates to Sparta. There her own delegates violently attacked the Athenians for having broken the truce and committed acts of aggression against the Peloponnese. The people of Aegina were on her side. Out of fear of Athens they had not sent a formal delegation, but behind the scenes they played a considerable part in fomenting war, saying that they had not been given the independence promised to them by the treaty. The Spartans also issued an invitation to their own allies and to anyone else who claimed to have suffered from Athenian aggression. They then held their usual assembly, and gave an opportunity there for delegates to express their views. Many came forward with various complaints. In particular the delegates from Megara, after mentioning a number of other grievances, pointed out that, contrary to the terms of the treaty, they were excluded from all the ports in the Athenian empire and from the market of Athens itself. The Corinthians were the last to come forward and speak, having allowed the previous speakers to do their part in hardening Spartan opinion against Athens. The Corinthian speech was about as follows. (1.66)

LS: Ya. So now comes the Corinthian speech, but that is not the only speech, it's only the toughest, the most aggressive of the speeches, and for this reason given by Thucydides. Now how do the Corinthians proceed? Let's see that.

Reader:
"Spartans, what makes you somewhat reluctant to listen to us others, if we have ideas to put forward, is the great trust and confidence which you have in your own constitution and in your own way of life. This is a quality which certainly makes you moderate in your judgements; it is also, perhaps, responsible for a kind of ignorance which you show when you are dealing with foreign affairs. Many times before now we have told you what we were likely to suffer from Athens, and on each occasion, instead of taking to heart what we were telling you, you chose instead to suspect our motives and to consider that we were speaking only about our own grievances. The result has been that you did not call together this meeting of our allies before the damage was done; you waited until now, when we are actually suffering from it. And of all these allies, we have perhaps the best right to speak now, since we have the most serious complaints to make. We have to complain of Athens for her insolent aggression and of Sparta for her neglect of our advice." (1.68)

LS: So in other—well, of course the blame of Athens is brought forth in a nice way: You are so *decent* people, you Spartans, and that is the reason why you wait so long. And that is your sôphrosynê [σωφροσύνη], your moderation, your self-control, which is a marvelous thing but which makes you also so *blind*. You don't see criminal actions because you yourself are incapable of committing them. That's the beginning. But now, how does he go on?

Reader:
"If there were anything doubtful or obscure about this aggression on the whole of Hellas, our task would have been to try to put facts before you and show you something that you did not know. As it is, long speeches are unnecessary. You can see yourselves how Athens has deprived some states of their freedom and is scheming to do the same for others, especially among our own allies, and that she herself has for a long time been preparing for the eventuality of war. Why otherwise should she have forcibly taken over from us the control of Corcyra? Why is she besieging Potidaea? Potidaea is the best possible case for any campaign in Thrace, and Corcyra might have contributed a very large fleet to the Peloponnesian League." (1.68)

LS: So in other words, these two acts of Athens show how the wind blows and what the Athenians are after. Yes?

Reader:
"And it is you who are responsible for all this. It was you who in the first place allowed the Athenians to fortify their city and build the Long Walls after the Persian War. Since then and up to the present day you have withheld freedom not only from those who have been enslaved by Athens but even from your own allies. When one is deprived of one's liberty one is right in blaming not so much the man who puts the fetters on as the one who had the power to prevent him, but did not use it—especially when such a one rejoices in the glorious reputation of having been the liberator of Hellas." (1.69)

LS: Namely, Athens, ya, which has acquired immortal fame as liberator of Greece and is now the enslaver of Greece. Yes?[ii]

Reader:
"Even at this stage it has not been easy to arrange this meeting, and even at this meeting there are no definite proposals. Why are we still considering whether aggression has taken place instead of how we can resist it? Men who are capable of real action first make their plans and then go forward without hesitation while their enemies have still not made up their minds. As for the Athenians, we know their methods and how they gradually encroach upon their neighbours. Now they are proceeding—"

LS: Method—he simply says "way." Ya? But that is one of the many things which the translator, as most translators give it an air of scientific language which is wholly alien to Thucydides, as well as to all classical writers. Yes?

Reader:

[ii] Strauss is clearly in error here: as the Corinthians put it to their balky ally, it is not the Athenians but the Spartans who have failed to live up to their reputations as liberators of Hellas.

"As for the Athenians, we know their ways and how they gradually encroach upon their neighbours. Now they are proceeding slowly because they think that your insensitiveness to the situation enables them to go on their own way unnoticed; you will find that they will develop their full strength once they realize that you do see what is happening and are still doing nothing to prevent it.

"You Spartans are the only people in Hellas who wait calmly on events, relying for your defense not on action but on making people think that you will act. You alone do nothing in the early stages to prevent an enemy's expansion; you wait until your enemy has doubled his strength. Certainly you used to have the reputation of being safe and sure enough: now one wonders whether this reputation was deserved. The Persians, as we know ourselves, came from the ends of the earth and got as far as the Peloponnese before you were able to put a proper force into the field to meet them. The Athenians, unlike the Persians, live close to you, yet still you do not appear to notice them; instead of going out to meet them, you prefer to stand still and wait till you are attacked, thus hazarding everything by fighting with opponents who have grown far stronger than they were originally.

"In fact you know that the chief reason for the failure of the Persian invasion was the mistaken policy of the Persians themselves; and you know, too, that there have been many occasions when, if we managed to stand up to Athenian aggression, it was more because of Athenian mistakes than because of any help we got from you. Indeed, we can think of instances already where those who have relied on you and remained unprepared have been ruined by the confidence they placed in you.

"We should not like any of you to think that we are speaking in an unfriendly spirit. We are only remonstrating with you, as is natural when one's friends are making mistakes. Real accusations must be kept for one's enemies who have actually done one harm." (1.69)

Should I go on?

LS: By all means.

Reader:
"Then also we think we have as much right as anyone else to point out faults in our neighbours, especially when we consider the enormous difference between you and the Athenians. To our minds, you are quite unaware of this difference; you have never yet tried to imagine what sort of people these Athenians are against whom you will have to fight—how much, indeed how completely different from you." (1.70)

LS: Ya. Now that is one of the most famous passages in Thucydides, and the only one dealing with the difference between the Spartans and the Athenians—with the two enemies, what *kind* of people they are. Now let us see how he describes them.

Reader:
"An Athenian is always an innovator, quick to form a resolution and quick at carrying it out. You, on the other hand, are good at keeping things as they are; you never originate an idea, and

your action tends to stop short of its aim. Then again, Athenian daring will outrun its own resources; they will take risks against their better judgement, and still, in the midst of danger, remain confident. But your nature is always to do less than you could have done, to mistrust your own judgement, however sound it may be, and to assume that dangers will last for ever. Think of this, too: while you are hanging back, they never hesitate; while you stay at home, they are always abroad; for they think that the farther they go the more they will get, while you think that any movement may endanger what you have already. If they win a victory, they follow it up at once, and if they suffer a defeat, they scarcely fall back at all. As for their bodies, they regard them as expendable for their city's sake, as though they were not their own; but each man cultivates his own intelligence, again with a view to doing something notable for his city. If they—"

LS: So in other words, their bodies, they regard their bodies as alien, which they are perfectly willing to squander for the sake of the city. But as for the mind, it is distinguished from the body there, and which cannot be regarded as something alien which one can squander, they put it entirely in the service of the city. Yes?

Reader:
"If they aim at something and do not get it, they think that they have been deprived of what belonged to them already; whereas, if their enterprise is successful, they regard that success as nothing compared to what they will do next. Suppose they fail in some undertaking; they make good the loss immediately by setting their hopes in some other direction. Of them alone it may be said that they possess a thing almost as soon as they have begun to desire it, so quickly with them does action follow upon decision. And so they go on working away in hardship and danger all the days of their lives, seldom enjoying their possessions because they are always adding to them. Their view of a holiday is to do what needs doing; they prefer hardship and activity to peace and quiet. In a word, they are by nature incapable of either living a quiet life themselves or of allowing anyone else to do so." (1.70)

LS: Now always active, always *novarum rerum cupidi*, "desirous of new things": new inventions, eager to change, and of course for their own benefit. And the Spartans, cautious, conservative, and in a way an eternal opposition in political matters. That is at least how the situation is presented to the Spartans by the Corinthians, who want to incite the Spartans to fight the Athenians. They want to enlighten the Spartans about the Athenians. Yes?

Reader:
"That is the character of the city which is opposed to you. Yet you still hang back; you will not see that the likeliest way of securing peace is this: only to use one's power in the cause of justice, but to make it perfectly plain that one is resolved not to tolerate aggression. On the contrary, your idea of proper behaviour is, firstly, to avoid harming others, and then to avoid being harmed yourselves, even if it is a matter of defending your own interests. Even if you had on your frontiers a power holding the same principles as you do, it is hard to see how such a policy could have been a success. But at the present time, as we have just pointed out to you, your whole way of life is out of date when compared with theirs. And it is just as true in politics as it is in any art or craft: new methods must drive out old ones.[iii] When a city—" (1.71)

[iii] Here the reader corrects the translation and says "new ways."

LS: So it is sufficiently clear how the Corinthians see the Athenians and want Spartans to see them. This is of course also a speech which does not claim to be literal; at the beginning of chapter 72, it is again said "such like things were said by the Corinthians." So we have heard the Corinthians, and what the other allies said against the Athenians, we can guess. The Corinthians give as if it were the quintessence of the complaints. Now we must hear also the other side, namely, the Athenians. That comes in the next chapter, 72.

Reader:
There happened to be already in Sparta some Athenian representatives who had come there on other business. When they heard the speeches that had been made, they decided that they, too, ought to claim a hearing. Not that they had any intention of defending themselves against any of the charges that had been made against Athens by the various cities, but they wished to make a general statement and to point out that this was an affair which needed further consideration and ought not to be decided upon at once. They wanted also to make clear how—

LS: They wanted at the same time. First warning: don't act rashly. Second, what is the next point?

Reader:
They wanted also to make clear how powerful their city was, to remind the elder members of the assembly of facts that were known to them, and to inform the younger ones of matters in which they were ignorant. In this way they hoped to divert their audience from the idea of war and make them incline towards letting matters rest. They therefore approached the Spartans and said that, if there was no objection, they, too, would like to make a speech before the assembly. The Spartans invited them to do so, and they came forward and spoke about as follows: (1.72)

LS: Ya, so that is not literal; it does not claim to be a literal report. Now here we have the rare case that Thucydides gives in his own words a summary of a speech which he is going to reproduce before he presents the speech itself. And so we are in a [position], or could think that we are in a position to see the difference between a Thucydidean summary, an objective summary, and a Thucydidian reproduction, a subjective reproduction of such a speech. Now let us see whether that is the case. Yes?

Reader:
"This delegation of ours did not come here to enter into a controversy with your allies, but to deal with the business on which our city sent us. We observe, however, that—"

LS: You see Thucydides doesn't regard it worthwhile even to mention what that business was, because it is irrelevant compared with the big issue of peace and war with which this assembly is concerned. Yes?

Reader:
"We observe, however, that extraordinary attacks have been made on us, and so we have come forward to speak. We shall make no reply to the charges which these cities have made against us. Your assembly is not a court of law, competent to listen to pleas either from them or from us.

Our aim is to prevent you from coming to the wrong decision on a matter of great importance through paying too much attention to the views of your allies. At the same time—"

LS: The same expression that he used before: *kai hama* [καὶ ἅμα], "at the same time," but what does he say now?

Reader:
"At the same time we should like to examine the general principles of the argument used against us and to make you see that our gains have been reasonable enough and that our city is one that deserves a certain consideration."

LS: Ya. In his summary he had said of what power Athens was. Ya? That is not the expression which he uses here. [1]The Athenians use a much more polite expression, a much more modest expression, that the position which they occupy in Greece is not undeserved and it is our—and Athens is worthy of consideration. Apparently they don't want to speak of the *power* of Athens. So now, and the important point of course is this, which is in no way underlined by Thucydides: these people had not been commissioned by the city of Athens to take, to defend Athens, Athenian policy in Sparta, but they happened to be in Sparta and heard of that and then, without being commissioned, but being Athenians, individuals who could act on their own, they use this opportunity to state the case for Athens. So Thucydides shows us Athens in the action of these nameless Athenians. Yes?

Reader:
"There is no need to talk about what happened long ago: there our evidence would be that of hearsay rather than that of eyewitnesses amongst our audience. But we must refer to the Persian War—" (1.73)

LS: So in other words, these beautiful myths about the grand past of Athens, Theseus and so on and so on, that they don't say that's just myth or bunk but that is too well known to be mentioned. But the Persian Wars, although they are about seventy years back,[iv] they cannot be completely dismissed because they are relevant for the present situation. What does he say about that? Yes?

Reader:
"But we must refer to the Persian war, to events well known to you all, even though you may be tired of constantly hearing the story. In our actions at that time we ventured everything for the common good; you have your share in what was gained; do not deprive us of all our share of glory and of the good that it may do us. We shall not be speaking in the spirit of one who is asking a favour, but of one who is producing evidence. Our aim is to show you what sort of a city you will have to fight against, if you make the wrong decision.

"This is our record. At Marathon we stood out against the Persians and faced them single-handed. In the later invasion, when we were unable to meet the enemy on land, we and all our people took to our ships, and joined in the battle at Salamis. It was this battle that prevented the Persians from sailing against the Peloponnese and destroying the cities one by one; for no system

[iv] Actually, only fifty years.

of mutual defence could have been organized in the face of the Persian naval superiority. The best proof of this is in the conduct of the Persians themselves. Once they had lost the battle at sea they realized that their force was crippled and they immediately withdrew most of their army. That, then was the result, and it proved that the fate of Hellas depended on her navy. Now, we contributed to this result in three important ways: we produced most of the ships, we provided the most intelligent of the generals, and we displayed the most unflinching courage. Out of—"

LS: Ya, it's more than courage, *prothymia* [προθυμία]. "zeal" or something. "Eagerness." Yes?

Reader:
"Out of the 400 ships, nearly two-thirds were ours: the commander was Themistocles, who was mainly responsible for the battle being fought in the straits, and this, obviously, was what saved us. You yourselves in fact, because of this, treated him with more distinction than you have ever treated any visitor from abroad. And the courage, the daring that we showed were without parallel. With no help coming to us by land, with all the states up to our frontier already enslaved, we chose to abandon our city and to sacrifice our property; then, so far from deserting the rest of our allies in the common cause or making ourselves useless to them by dispersing our forces, we took to our ships and chose the path of danger, with no grudges against you for not having come to our help earlier. So it is that we can claim to have given more than we received. There were still people living in the cities which you left behind you, and you were fighting to preserve them; when you sent out your forces you feared for yourselves much more than for us (at all events, you never put in an appearance until we had lost everything). Behind us, on the other hand, was a city that had ceased to exist; yet we still went forward and ventured our lives for this city that seemed so impossible to recover. Thus we joined you and helped to save not only ourselves but you also. But if we, like others, had been frightened about our land and had made terms with the Persians before you arrived, or if, later, we had regarded ourselves as irretrievably ruined and had lacked the courage to take to our ships, then there would no longer have been any point in your fighting the enemy at sea, since you would not have had enough ships. Instead things would have gone easily and quietly just as the Persians wished.

"Surely, Spartans, the courage, the resolution, and the ability which we showed then ought not to be repaid by such immoderate hostility from the Hellenes—especially so far as our empire is concerned. We did not gain this empire by force. It came to us at a time when you were unwilling to fight on to the end against the Persians. At this time our allies came to us of their own accord and begged us to lead them. It was the actual course of events which first compelled us to increase our power to its present extent—" (1.73-75)

LS: Compelled! That is again the keyword. There was no frivolity on the side of Athens. The Athenians were compelled because no one stood between Greece and the Persians except the Athenian navy, the Athenian navy on which the Athenian population had taken refuge. And they sacrificed their city, the temples and everything, merely in order to save Greece. And then as an inevitable consequence of that action, the other Greeks became the allies of Athens in such a way, naturally, that Athens was the hegemonial power. Athens determined what would be done against the Persians and what would not be done. Yes?

Reader:

"fear of Persia was our chief motive, though afterwards we thought, too, of our own honor and our own interest. Finally— "

LS: Ya, most of all he doesn't say "fear of Persians." Fear, three motives: fear, honor, and utility. These *compelling* powers led first to our hegemonial position in Greece and then to our empire. And what is justified by these three things is unblamable, is just, and therefore the distinction between justice and necessity or compulsion doesn't apply. Yes?

Reader:
"Finally there came a time when we were surrounded by enemies, when we had already crushed some revolts, when you had lost the friendly feelings that you used to have for us and had turned against us and begun to arouse our suspicion: at this point it was clearly no longer safe to for us to risk letting our empire go, especially as any allies that left us would go over to you. And when tremendous dangers are involved no one can be blamed for looking to his own interest.

"Certainly you Spartans, in your leadership of the Peloponnese, have arranged the affairs of the various states so as to suit yourselves. And if, in the years of which we were speaking, you had gone on taking an active part in the war and had become unpopular, as we did, in the course of exercising your leadership, we have little doubt that you would have been just as hard upon your allies as we were, and that you would have been forced either to govern strongly or to endanger your own security."

LS: "Force" is always the same word in Greek: *anankazo* [ἀναγκάζω] "compelled." Ya. Yes?

Reader:
"So it is with us. We have done nothing extraordinary, nothing contrary to human nature in accepting an empire when it was offered to us and then in refusing to give it up. Three very powerful motives prevent us from doing so, security—

LS: Ya, it seems the stronger of the three, *the* three most—the strongest things "by which we were defeated." Yes? Namely?

Reader:
"The three strongest things prevent us from doing so—security, honour, and self-interest." (1.75-76)

LS: Ya. More literally, honor, and fear, and all right, self-interest. He puts now—first he had mentioned fear in the first place, because that was a primary motive, but now he puts in the center, which is in a slightly more hidden way and [puts] emphasis on its central importance. Fear justifies more than honor and utility would, because if utility and honor would be sufficient grounds for aggression, there is no war which is unjust, because no one—can you think of any war which was waged for any reason other than fear, honor, self-interest? I mean, there may be error in these matters, but still, the objective was one of these. But the most defensible of the three is fear: if you fight for your life, no one can blame you. That has a tremendous history afterwards and became then, to mention only the most well-known appearance, the political philosophy of Hobbes: *Fear* of violent death is the unblamable and absolutely defensible motive

of just action. And what is true of the individual is in a way truer of the city. No city can, no political society can be blamed for trying to preserve itself by all means, by hook and by crook. But this will be developed much more fully in the rest of the book. Here is only the beginning. Yes?

Reader:
"And we were not the first to act in this way. Far from it. It has always been a rule that the weak should be subject to the strong; and besides, we consider that we are worthy of our power. Up till the present moment you, too, used to think that we were; but now, after calculating your own interest, you are beginning to talk in terms of right and wrong."

LS: Ya, well, this is nice, ya? Now you use the *dikaios logos* [δίκαιος λόγος], "the just speech," which was known—perhaps not at the time when Thucydides wrote it; we really don't know when he wrote this speech, but surely when he published it. From Aristophanes's *Clouds*, there is a figure called the Just Speech, and he defends the cause of justice against injustice,[v] and now the just speech, this very comical figure: Use Spartans, use now, when it suits you. That's ridiculous. Yes?

Reader:
"Considerations of this kind have never yet turned people aside from the opportunities of aggrandizement offered by superior strength. Those who really deserve praise are the people who, while human enough to enjoy power, nevertheless pay more attention to justice than they are compelled to do by their situation. Certainly we think that if anyone else was in our position it would soon be evident whether we act with moderation or not. Yet, unreasonably enough, our very consideration for others has brought us more blame than praise. For example, in law-suits with our allies arising out of contracts we have put ourselves at a disadvantage, and when we arrange to have such cases tried by impartial courts in Athens, people merely say that we are overfond of going to law. No one bothers to inquire why this reproach is not made against other imperial Powers, who treat their subjects much more harshly than we do: the fact being, of course, that where force can be used there is no need to bring in the law. Our subjects, on the other hand, are used to being treated as equals; consequently, when they are disappointed in what they think right and suffer even the smallest disadvantage because of a judgement in our courts or because of the power that our empire gives us, they cease to feel grateful to us for all the advantages which we have left to them: indeed, they feel more bitterly over this slight disparity than they would feel if we, from the first, had set the law aside and had openly enriched ourselves at their expense. Under those conditions they would certainly not have disputed the fact that the weak must give in to the strong. People, in fact, seem to feel more strongly about their legal wrongs than about the wrongs inflicted on them by violence. In the first case they think they are being outdone by an equal, in the second case that they are being compelled by a superior. Certainly they put up with much worse sufferings than these when they were under the Persians, but now they think that our government is oppressive. That is natural enough, perhaps, since subject peoples always find the present time most hard to bear. But on one point we are quite certain: if you were to destroy us and to take over our empire, you would soon lose all the goodwill which you have gained because of others being afraid of us—that is, if you are going to

[v] Aristophanes *Clouds* 889-1104.

stick to those principles of behaviour which you showed before, in the short time when you led Hellas against the Persians." (1.76-77)

LS: In other words, that is, power and the *use* of power, the selfish use of power, that's inevitable, and it is simply hypocrisy to complain about it. And if the shoe were on the other foot, if Sparta were the hegemonial Greek power, then Sparta would be not as nice, not as restrained in the use of their power as Athens was. So the Athenians don't have to apologize for what they did: that belongs to the human condition, to the human nature, what the Athenians did, and there is always an imperial power in the world which uses that power for its own interest.[vi]

Reader:
"which is an important one. Do not allow considerations for other people's opinions and other people's complaints to involve you in difficulties which you will feel yourselves. Think, too, of the great part that is played by the unpredictable in war: think of it now, before you are actually committed to war. The longer a war lasts, the more things tend to depend on accidents. Neither you nor we can see into them; we have to abide their outcome in the dark. And when people are entering upon a war they do things the wrong way round. Action comes first, and it is only when they have already suffered that they begin to think. We, however, are still far removed from such a mistaken attitude; so, to the best of our belief, are you. And so we urge you, now, while we are both still free to make sensible decisions, do not break the peace, do not go back upon your oaths; instead let us settle our differences by arbitration, as is laid down in the treaty. If you will not do so, we shall have as our witnesses the gods who heard our oaths. You will have begun the war, and we shall attempt to meet you in any and every field of action that you may choose."

LS: Ya. So that is the end of the Athenian speech, which is also, as we will see from the very beginning of chapter 79, not the literal rendering of the Athenian speech. "The Athenians said something of this kind." The Athenians are the first to refer to the gods, because they refer, they are concerned with preserving the peace, preserving the solemnly sworn treaties and the sermons, and they refer to the gods, naturally. Now we have heard the case for Corinth, the allies of Sparta, and we have heard the case for Athens. Now what comes then?

Reader: The Spartans. Should I go on?

LS: Ya, let us first finish that step. Yes?

Reader:
The Athenians spoke as I have described. Now the Spartans had heard the complaints made by their allies against Athens and also the Athenian reply. They therefore requested all outsiders to leave and discussed the situation among themselves. Most people's views tended to the same conclusion, namely, that Athens was already acting aggressively and that war should be declared without delay. However, the Spartan King Archidamus, a man who had a reputation for both intelligence and moderation, came forward and made the following speech. (1.79)

LS: "He said something of the following kind." You see, Thucydides doesn't say that Archidamus was sensible and moderate, but he had the *reputation* of being sensible and

[vi] The tape was changed at this point.

moderate. What Thucydides thought of him, we don't know. At any rate, he had a reputation for being sensible, and Thucydides thinks that is important to keep in mind. Thucydides obviously has sympathy for this man, but whether he was wise and the policy proposed by him was wise is an entirely different question. So we hear now the Spartan side, but the Spartan side is split. There are hawks and there are doves. And first the leader of the doves speaks, the King Archidamus, and then the leader of the hawks. Now?

Reader:
"Spartans, in the course of my life I have taken part in many wars, and I see among you people of the same age as I am. They and I have had experience, and so are not likely to share in what may be a general enthusiasm for war, nor to think that war is a good thing or a safe thing. And you will find, if you look carefully into the matter, that this present war which you are now discussing is not likely to be anything on a small scale. When we are engaged with the Peloponnesians and neighbours, the forces on both sides are of the same type, and we can strike rapidly where we wish to strike. With Athens it is different. Here we shall be engaged with people who live far off, people also who have the widest experience of the sea and who are extremely well equipped in all other directions, very wealthy both as individuals and as a state, with ships and cavalry and hoplites, with a population bigger than that of any other place in Hellas, and then, too, with numbers of allies who pay tribute to them. How, then, can we irresponsibly start a war with such a people? What have we to rely upon if we rush into it unprepared? Our navy? It is inferior to theirs, and if we are to give proper attention to it and build it up to their strength, that will take time. Or are we relying on our wealth? Here we are at an even greater disadvantage: we have no public funds, and it is no easy matter to secure contributions from private sources. Perhaps there is ground for confidence in the superiority which we have in heavy infantry and in actual numbers, assets which will enable us to invade and devastate their land. Athens, however, controls plenty of land outside Attica and can import what she wants by sea. And if we try to make her allies revolt from her, we shall have to support them with a fleet, since most of them are on the islands. What sort of war, then, are we going to fight? If we can neither defeat them at sea nor take away from them the resources on which their navy depends, we shall do ourselves more harm than good. We shall then find that we can no longer even make an honourable peace, especially if it is thought that it was we who began the quarrel." (1.80-81)

LS: You see, that is important. The allies act on the assumption that the Athenians have broken the treaty. Archidamus mentions this in passing, but that is not irrelevant. This is not settled, whether Athens has broken the treaty, and that is why this is not strongly stressed by Thucydides. It comes up again and again and later on, in book 7 or thereabouts, it is made clear that Sparta cut such a poor figure in the first years of the Peloponnesian War because the Spartans had a bad conscience: they thought that they had broken the treaty and therefore their defeats were well deserved, whereas in the second part of the war, starting 415, it was *clearly* the case that Athens had started the war; and therefore the Spartans had a good conscience, and therefore they fought well.[vii] These things also exist. Although Mr. Gomme would say these are sentimental grounds, they are nonetheless powerful. Yes?

Reader:

[vii] Thucydides 7.18.2-3.

"For we must not bolster ourselves up with the false hope that if we devastate their land, the war will soon be over. I fear that it is more likely that we shall be leaving it to our children after us. So convinced am I that the Athenians have too much pride to become the slaves of their own land, or to shrink back from warfare as though they were not inexperienced in it as though they were inexperienced in it.

"Not that I am suggesting that we should calmly allow them to injure our allies and should turn a blind eye to their machinations. What I do suggest is that we should not take up arms at the present moment; instead we should send to them and put our grievances before them; we should not threaten war too openly, though at the same time we should make it clear that we are not going to let them have their own way. In the meantime we should be making our own preparations by winning over new allies both among Hellenes and among foreigners—from any quarter, in fact, where we can increase our naval and financial resources. No one can blame us for securing our own safety by taking foreigners as well as Greeks into our alliance—" (1.81-82)

LS: Ya, "foreigners" is of course "barbarians" always, and there is of course a certain difficulty because *the* great glory was the Persian War, the war against the barbarians in which the Athenians in the first place, but to some extent also the Spartans, claimed to have saved Greece. Yes?

Reader:
"No one can blame us for securing our own safety by taking barbarians[viii] as well as Greeks into our alliance when we are, as is the fact, having our position undermined by the Athenians. At the same time we must put our own affairs in order. If they pay attention to our diplomatic protests, so much the better. If they do not, then, after two or three years have passed, we shall be in a much sounder position and can attack them, if we decide to do so. And perhaps when they see that our actual strength is keeping pace with the language that we use, they will be more inclined to give way, since their land will still be untouched and, in making up their minds, they will be thinking of advantages which they still possess and which have not yet been destroyed. For you must think of their land as though it was a hostage in your possession, and all the more valuable the better it is looked after. You should spare it up to the last possible moment, and avoid driving them to a state of desperation in which you will find them much harder to deal with. If now in our present state of unpreparedness we lay their land waste, hurried into this course by the complaints of our allies, I warn you to take care that our action does not bring to the Peloponnese still more shame and still greater difficulties. As for complaints, whether they come from cities or from private individuals, they are capable of arrangement; but when war is declared by our whole confederacy for the sake of the interests of some of us, and when it is impossible to foresee the course that the war will take, then an honourable settlement is not an easy thing at all." (1.82)

LS: The fact to which he refers regarding the land of Athens, of Attica, the only thing which the Spartans could easily do was to invade Attica and to devastate the country. Now this would be a considerable hardship for the rural population and for anyone who had possessions outside of the city walls, and he thinks that the only hope of the Spartans is really that this might induce the Athenians to give in, and as appears very soon, once the war has started this didn't have the

[viii] Warner has "foreigners."

slightest influence on the war policy of Athens. The Athenians were patriotic enough to sacrifice their possessions outside of the city walls for the sake of their imperial greatness.Yes?

Reader:
"Let no one call it cowardice if we, in all our numbers, hesitate before attacking a single city. They have just as many allies as we have, and their allies pay tribute. And war is not so much a matter of armaments as of the money which makes armaments effective: particularly is this true in a war fought between a land power and a sea power. So let us first of all see to our finances and, until we have done so, avoid being swept away by speeches from our allies. It is we who shall bear most of the responsibility for what happens later, whether it is good or bad; we should therefore be allowed to take the time to look into some of these possibilities at our leisure. (1.83)

"As for being slow and cautious—which is the usual criticism made against us—there is nothing to be ashamed of in that." (1.83-84)

LS: That is his reply to the Corinthians, who had referred to this quality of the Spartans. Yes?

Reader:
"If you take something on before you are ready for it, hurry at the beginning will mean delay at the end. Besides, the city in which we live has always been free and always famous. 'Slow'and 'cautious' can equally well be 'wise' and 'sensible'. Certainly it is because we possess these qualities that we are the only people who do not become arrogant when we are successful, and who in times of stress are less likely to give in than others. We are not carried away by the pleasure of hearing ourselves praised when people are urging us towards dangers that seem to us unnecessary; and we are no more likely to give in shamefacedly to other people's views when they try to spur us on by their accusations. Because of our well-ordered life we are both brave in war and wise in council. Brave, because self-control is based upon a sense of honour, and honour is based on courage. And we are wise because we are not so highly educated as to look down upon our laws and customs, and are too rigorously trained in self-control to be able to disobey them. We are trained to avoid being too clever in matters that are of no use—such as being able to produce an excellent theoretical criticism of one's enemies' dispositions, and then—"

LS: As the Corinthians had done, ya? That is: We are not good at this kind of propaganda, and that is not a defect of ours. Yes?

Reader:
"and then failing in practice to do quite so well against them. Instead we are taught that there is not a great deal of difference between the way we think and the way others think, and that is impossible to calculate accurately events that are determined by chance. The practical measures that we take are always based on the assumption that our enemies are not unintelligent. And it is right and proper for us to put our hopes in the reliability of our own precautions rather than in the possibility of our opponent making mistakes." (1.84)

LS: In other words, what the Corinthians said about the difference of national character of Athens and Sparta, that is of no importance. They are both human beings, and that determines the actions on both sides. Of course this speech must be—and Thucydides's judgment on that

speech will come out only through the *History* as a whole. For example, how did Sparta behave in victory? How did she behave in disaster? How did Athens behave in victory? How did Athens behave in disaster? And I believe that we would find that Athens stood up much better in disaster than Sparta, much better, and that therefore what Archidamus says is not simply true, and therefore Thucydides has a perfectly good reason in making a distinction between Archidamus's *reputation* and Archidamus's being. He was not as prudent, the speech is not as prudent as he was [reputed to be]. He appeals as it were to an ideal Sparta, of which one cannot possible know prior to the war whether it exists or not, and it will appear in the sequel that it did not exist, so we must keep this [in] mind. Now?

Reader:
"There is no need to suppose that human beings differ very much one from another: but it is true that the ones who come out on top are the ones who have been trained in the hardest school.

"Let us never give up this discipline which our fathers have handed down to us and which we still preserve and which has always done us good. Let us not be hurried, and in one short day's space come to a decision which will so profoundly affect the lives of men and their fortunes, the fates of cities and their national honour. We ought to take time over such a decision. And we, more than others, can afford to take time, because we are strong. As for the Athenians, I advise sending a mission to them about Potidaea and also about the other cases where our allies claim to have been ill treated. Especially is this the right thing to do since the Athenians themselves are prepared to submit to arbitration, and when one party offers this it is quite illegal to attack him first, as though he was definitely in the wrong. And at the same time carry on your preparations for war. This decision is the best one you can make for yourselves, and is also the one most likely to inspire fear in your enemies." (1.84-85)

LS: Ya. Now let us finish this debate.

Reader:
After this speech of Archidamus—

LS: Ya, he's spoken about this matter.

Reader: Sthenelaidas?

LS: Sthenelaidas.[ix]

Reader:
Sthenelaidas, one of the ephors of that year, came forward to make the final speech, which was as follows:

"I do not understand these long speeches which the Athenians make. Though they said a great deal in praise of themselves, they made no attempt to contradict the fact that they are acting aggressively against our allies and against the Peloponnese. And surely, if it is the fact that they had a good record in the past against the Persians and now have a bad record as regards us, then

[ix] Strauss corrects the reader's pronunciation.

they deserve to pay double for it, since, though they were once good, they have now turned out bad. We are the same then and now, and if we are sensible, we shall not allow any aggression against our allies and shall not wait before we come to their help." (1.85-86)

LS: This argument is used by both by the hawk as well as by the dove: We Spartans have not changed. We were the same people in the Persian War and we are the same people now, and we were good then, we are good now. Yes?

Reader:
"They are no longer waiting before being ill treated. Others may have a lot of money and ships and horses, but we have good allies, and we ought not to betray them to the Athenians. And this is not a matter to be settled by law-suits and by words: it is not because of words that our own interests are suffering. Instead we should come to the help of our allies quickly and with all our might. And let no one try to tell us that when we are being attacked we should sit down and discuss matters; these long discussions are rather for those who are meditating aggression themselves. Therefore, Spartans, cast your votes for the honour of Sparta and for war! Do not allow the Athenians to grow still stronger! Do not entirely betray your allies! Instead let us, with the help of heaven, go forward to meet the aggressor!" (1.86)

LS: With the gods!

Reader:
With the gods.

After this speech, he himself—

LS: After he had said such like things. Ya?

Reader:
After he had said such like things, he,[x] in his capacity of ephor, put the question to the Spartan assembly. They make their decision by acclamation, not by voting, and Sthenelaidas said at first that he could not decide on which side the acclamations were the louder. This was because he wanted to make them show their opinions openly and so make them all the more enthusiastic for war. He therefore said: "Spartans, those of you who think that the treaty has been broken and that the Athenians are aggressors, get up and stand on one side. Those who do not think so, stand on the other side," and he pointed out to them where they were to stand. They then rose to their feet and separated into two divisions. The great majority were of the opinion that the treaty had been broken.

They then summoned their allies to the assembly and told them that they had decided that Athens was acting aggressively, but that they wanted to have all their allies with them when they put the vote, so that, if they decided to make war, it should be done on the basis of a unanimous resolution.

[x] Warner has "After this speech he himself."

Afterwards the allied delegates, having got their own way, returned home. Later the Athenian representatives, when they had finished the business for which they had come, also returned. This decision of the assembly that the treaty had been broken took place in the fourteenth year of the thirty years' truce which was made after the affair of Euboea. (1.87)

LS: In other words, sixteen years, the peace treaty demanded sixteen more years of peace, and the Spartans asserted that Athens had broken the treaty. In fact, Sparta broke the treaty. Ya. That is of course not said by Thucydides at this place—it comes out later. Yes?

Reader:
The Spartans voted that the treaty had been broken and that war should be declared not so much because they were influenced by the speeches of their allies as because they were afraid of the further growth of Athenian power, seeing, as they did, that already the greater part of Hellas was under the control of Athens. (1.88)

LS: Ya. So this is the end of the manifest and openly stated causes of the war. Then he gives in the sequel, beginning in chapter 89, an account of how Athens acquired her power, that is to say, the history of Greece from the Persian War until the Peloponnesian War roughly, or a few years before the Peloponnesian War. These are roughly fifty years; fifty years in Greek means *pentêkonta etê* [πεντήκοντα ἔτη], therefore [we] call it Pentekontaetia, "the fifty-years-epoch" between the two wars, which comes in seemingly at the wrong place, because Thucydides had spoken hitherto of what had happened roughly between 435 and 432, and then he goes back now to what happened between 479 and 435.

Ya. Well, what is your impression of these two speeches in Sparta? Where does Thucydides stand? After all, when you hear these two men and *see* them, and Thucydides makes you see them, you can't help siding with one or the other, or at least to some in one way with one and in another way with the other. And that is important, otherwise one doesn't understand Thucydides if one does not reflect on what he presents to us.

Student: Sthenelaidas's speech is very short.

LS: Ya, well, he is a nasty customer, isn't he, even if he is right. The way in which he does this, and this cheap trick, [is] that he makes the two parties go to different places in the assembly hall so that they can see, everyone can see how many are in favor of war and how few are in favor of peace. And the brevity of the speech, and the complete absence of any argument, takes it for granted [that] it is proven that the Athenians have broken the treaty, whereas the true situation is that the Athenians are *accused* of having broken the treaty but they are perfectly willing to submit to arbitration, and the treaty had provided exactly for this situation. And in such a situation one should attend arbitration before taking sterner measures. Archidamus plays a certain role in the war, in the next first years of the war, and the first part of the war is generally called the Archidamian war. Sthenelaidas doesn't occur again, meaning he occurs only in this speech, but of course an ephor was a man who had a ruling position only for a year, whereas the king was for lifetime. There were two kings in Sparta, as we will see later.

Same Student: It's hard to say; actually they both use the same arguments in a way, but the difference seems to be arising because the Athenians are expanding their empire and Thucydides stresses very much that people are afraid of the empire.

LS: But on the other hand, the Athenians are perfectly willing to have recourse to arbitration, not to submit to a so-called neutral law court, they wouldn't—

Same Student: Yeah, but this is now a recommendation that they already started doing something. The arbitration is now that there is a certain *fait accompli*.

LS: Ya, but still, there has not been an official discussion through embassies of the affairs of Corcyra and Potidaea.

Student: On this sort of moderation, you had said that you could call just what someone did out of mortal fear.

LS: I beg your pardon?

Same Student: It seems as though this qualifies the limits, in an obvious way, "quote, saying that what one does out of mortal fear is just."

LS: Ya, that is what the Athenians say.

Same Student: But if the Spartans are likewise in fear of violence and are going to war immediately as a result of that fear, and yet they had other courses of action—

LS: Ya, but that is not what Sthenelaidas says. Sthenelaidas says, We must make war because the Athenians had broken the treaty. [2]They have recourse to the just speech. The Athenians don't use the just speech. The Athenians say: When you are endangered, you are entitled to wage war. That's not what the Spartan ephor says.

Same Student: That's true. Thucydides says it wasn't so much because of his speech as because they were afraid of further growth of Athenian power.

LS: Yes, but[3] there is this difference. [4]There are these two levels, as it were: the level of justice and the level of compulsion or necessity. And Sthenelaidas is only interested in the question of compulsion or necessity, the Athenians apparently also. But where does Thucydides stand? Why does Thucydides make the distinction by having the first speech occurring in the book beginning with the word "just" and having the second speech, the reply to the first, beginning with the word "necessary," and thus draw our attention to the difference between justice and necessity? These are two different considerations, are they not?

Student: Archdamus makes the argument that they are not compelled to go to war with Athens . . .

LS: That is so hard to say, what compulsion means. You know? I mean, if someone confronts you with a loaded gun in a street where no one else is, then you can speak of compulsion although the gun may not be loaded, and the fellow may not be able to shoot for one reason or the other. But still one would generally say, [a] kind of legal fiction, we were compelled to shoot first. But in war the thing is not as simple. I mean, when the Japanese sank the bulk of the American fleet at Pearl Harbor, clearly they began the war. America was compelled to declare war. But not all cases are so simple. As a matter of fact, there are in modern times exceptions, because a certain thing called international law had developed, and which since a long time, especially Roman times, required certain formalities to be fulfilled so that the war could be regarded a proper or just war. Dr. Kass?

Dr. Kass: Your earlier comment about Archidamus suggests that—called attention to this passage where Thucydides says that he has the reputation for being wise and moderate, and you hinted that Thucydides showed that in some way he doesn't deserve the reputation, like—

LS: Ya, at least it makes you wonder whether he agreed with that general judgment, because there are some cases, rare cases, where Thucydides does not make this qualification. For example, later on when he speaks of Nicias—you know, the Athenian general—he gives his opinion of Nicias without referring to what people thought of Nicias or said about him. So Thucydides was perfectly able to say: This and this individual had this and this character—although mostly he prefers qualified statements interjecting common opinion, popular opinion. And with that he forces us to wonder: What did he, Thucydides, think about that?

Dr. Kass: I thought your other suggestion was that at least between the two Spartans who speak here, Thucydides presents Archidamus in a much more favorable light.

LS: Well, but he obviously—

Dr. Kass: And that this was a wise—that of the two speeches this was clearly the wiser speech.

LS: Ya, well, if we may use the language of our time, Archidamus is obviously a gentleman, or simpatico, and Sthenelaidas is the opposite. I believe no one can deny that. But perhaps in order to balance that, Thucydides makes this qualification: he was *reputed*, Archidamus was reputed to be sensible and moderate. Because the fact that someone is a gentlemen does not yet prove that his policy is wise. Or does it not—is this not sensible?

Dr. Kass: I agree with the conclusion. I don't see in what we have before us any reason apart from this—one could say, you say he had a reputation simply because Archidamus is a Spartan and Thucydides would have no first hand way of knowing whether these opinions of him are right or not. . . .

LS: Ya, but Thucydides was exiled by Athens later on, and then he went into Sparta or to the Spartan empire and lived there for many years and had occasions to find out, either by talking to the individuals concerned or by talking to competent people who knew them, so that when he forms a judgment, he has a basis for it. He really was, one could say, in the first part of the war, where Sparta was legally unjust, he was on the Athenian side. And in the second part of the war,

where Sparta was legally unjust, he was—where *Athens* was legally unjust, he was on the Spartan side. So Thucydides's change of domicile has an ironical connection with his sense of justice. And not merely ironical, perhaps, because there was an individual called Cleon, who plays a role later on in the war, who had something to do probably with Thucydides's exile and who was opposed to Thucydides. And so Thucydides *belonged* to the nice people, the better people, as they were called in the former times; I don't know how they are called now. Perhaps they exist no longer, but today they would probably be called the people in favor of the work ethics, or Victorian ethics. I do not know. There is no exact parallel with that. He was a wealthy man, and the traditional view was that he was of royal descent.[xi] And Hobbes, who loved and admired Thucydides, said that just as he was of royal descent, he regarded monarchy as the best form of government, for which he gives the proof which today would be regarded generally as absurd, namely, that he thought that Pericles's period was the *best*, and at least was *practically* the best which Athens had and Pericles—while this was *nominally* a democracy, it was in fact the rule of the first citizen, a monarchy. Today this would be regarded as very preposterous. But still, the fact that it is now generally regarded as preposterous does not yet *make* it preposterous, and since Hobbes had some reasonable judgments in important points, it might pay to give it some consideration.

So I suggest that—ya, the administration has allowed us to meet next Wednesday and I would like to express to the administration in the name of everyone interested my gratitude for giving us that permission. And we will then discuss next time Thucydides's account of the fifty years between the Persian and the Peloponnesian Wars, chapter 89. Ya? 89 following. Now is there anything you would like to bring up? We have a few minutes left.

Student: Well, only the . . .

LS: I beg your pardon? [To the reader]: Can you translate, act as interpreter?

Student (Reader): Yes, he is puzzled by the lack of effect of Archidamus's speech. After he gives such a long speech, Sthenelaidas gets up and he's quickly approved.

LS: Ya, well, it was—

Student: It's completely ignored.

Student (Reader): Oh, by the Spartans or by Thucydides?

Same Student: . . .

[xi] Thucydides was the son of one Olorus, and Olorus was not a Greek name but had belonged to a Thracian king who had married his daughter to the Athenian statesman and general Miltiades (Herodotus *History* 6.39). The persistence of the name Olorus in Thucydides's family implied an assertion of descent from this king (and confirms that Thucydides was a member of the Philaids, the aristocratic clan to which Miltiades had belonged.) Hence the longstanding presumption that Thucydides was both wellborn and wealthy.

LS: Well, it was unpopular. That is not the first time that the sensible speech is unpopular, and therefore, however reasonable it is and however well presented, it doesn't have any influence on the audience, whereas Sthenelaidas's short, passionate accusation settles it. It was settled with the majority of Spartans before Archidamus spoke. That happens also in other countries and other times. Now is there any other point you would like to bring up?

Student: About the Athenian offer of arbitration: during the Athenian speech, I thought it became somewhat clear that the Athenians were able at the same time to make men dread and hate them and hold those same men at the same time in relative equality before the law in a legal court. it seemed to me that their ability—I got the impression that the Athenians were almost making legal justice in a law court an instrument of—

LS: It would not be a matter of the law court. They would not submit to a law court, they say, but what they mind is this: that in quite a few cases coming up between Athens and their so-called allies, the matters were not decided by political authorities but by the Athenian judiciary. And the Athenians were particularly hated—that is what the Athenians say—because they made these decisions judicially, not politically, and that has nothing to do with the question of arbitration. Arbitration is not a judicial procedure properly. I mean, there is not a recognition of a court as a law court.

Student: I was puzzled in the Corinthian speech by what the Corinthians have to say about the Athenians and the way they use their bodies in service of the state, and their minds also, even though they hold them privately they still are willing to use them in the service of the state. I wonder if they were implying anything about the Spartans and the way they used their bodies and minds.

LS: [5]Well, the Spartans had the reputation—that is not developed, but it's a good point to bring up—that they were rather selfish people. There is a reference later on in the speech of the Spartan king, that there is no public treasury to speak of in Sparta, and if they need money for public purposes like war, they have to tax, and they don't want to *pay* taxes. They are—well, this is a common human vice, but apparently in Sparta more strongly than in Athens. The Athenians were very patriotic people, and that they showed in various ways, and also that they recovered so quickly from *terrible* defeats, for example, in the disaster in Sicily. After—[xii]

[xii] The tape ends at this point.

Session 3: no date
Book 1, chapters 90-140

Leo Strauss: There is a somewhat simple but not untrue German rhyme which I cannot well translate into English rhyme, but the main point is that the purpose of teaching is to reduce the volume of stupidity. One can also say to reduce the volume of thoughtlessness, which is perhaps somewhat more precise. One point regarding which we today are particularly thoughtless is called history. We take it for granted that history is something good and useful, that ideally we should have a complete and detailed account of what men have done and suffered from the beginning until the present everywhere on earth. In order to liberate ourselves from this prejudice, the best help is an essay by Nietzsche in the "Meditations out of Season," number 2, "On the Use and Abuse of History." Equally good, if not better, is a study of Thucydides, because Thucydides seems to come closer to what we understand by a historian than any other premodern man. At any rate, in the present course we try to effect some liberation from this prejudice regarding history with the help of Thucydides.

Now Thucydides has a rather good press for a premodern man in our age. He is spoken of with much greater respect than Plato or Aristotle, to give this as a sign, but it is also admitted that unfortunately he does not live up to the standards of scientific history. The question is: Is this due to the fact that he was underdeveloped or to the fact that he was free, freer than the scientific historians? We can render the question perhaps more precise as follows. He says that his work is a possession forever, his work conveys the truth about man, at least about man as a political being, and yet it presents this possession for all times in the guise of a reliable account of one particular event, the Peloponnesian war, with all its accidents. What is the relation between these two ingredients, the possession for all times and the reliable account of one particular event with all its accidents? To repeat, Thucydides's work is a possession for all times, according to its claim, and yet it presents, so to speak, all the accidents of one particular war, even if that war should be in a sense the first universal war, as Thucydides claims near the beginning of the work. How can we recognize the universal, the essential in the accidental? How can we ascend from the accidental to the essential? That's the question which we must address to Thucydides.

Now we have read last time up to chapter 88 of the first book. In chapters 1 to 23 is the introduction, 24 to 88 presents a generally known and spoken about causes of the war—the tips of the iceberg, as it were, as distinguished from the iceberg itself. In chapter 89 following, Thucydides presents the iceberg: the truest cause of the war. Now this distinction between the superficial causes and the true cause of course is something of universal validity. Think only of the First World War: the assassination of Franz Ferdinand of Austria belongs surely to the superficial causes and was perhaps the most striking superficial cause, and the deeper cause was the conflict between Germany and the Entente Cordiale, plus England, without which the whole war would never have come about whether Franz Ferdinand was assassinated or not.

Now in order to present the truest cause of the war, or as Thucydides says with a somewhat ironical expression . . .[i] which was not spoken about, or hardly spoken about, that was of course the conflict between Athens and Sparta or the Peloponnesians altogether. And in order to present that Thucydides shows the genesis of this situation. In the first place, there were two individuals. In the first place, the Athenian Themistocles, the wily man who with great cleverness arranged that the walls of Athens and of the Piraeus, the harbor of Athens, were being built; and therefore [that] Athens [was] safe on the land side. That is up to chapter 93 inclusive. And then on the other hand the representative of Sparta, as it were, Pausanias, the Spartan king, the Spartan leader, who by his foolish conduct drove the allies of Sparta into the arms of Athens. And so by the cooperation, the unintended cooperation of Themistocles and Pausanias, the final arrangement, here Athens with her allies, here Sparta with her allies, was brought about. So we don't have to read that, although it is worth reading but we simply do not have the time to read that. And we turn now to chapter 97, if you don't mind. Do you have it?

Reader:
I shall now give an account of what they did in war and in the general conduct of affairs during the period from the end of the Persian to the beginning of the Peloponnesian War.[ii]

LS: Note the use of the first person singular. I mean, there is no pretense of impersonality by using the first person plural or using, speaking of Thucydides in the third person. Yes?

Reader:
Some of these actions were against the Persians, some against their own allies when they revolted, some against the Peloponnesian powers with whom on various occasions they became involved. I am giving this account and making this digression from my main narrative because this is a period that has not been dealt with by previous writers, whose subjects have been either Hellenic history before the Persian Wars or else the Persian Wars themselves. The only one of them who has touched upon this period is Hellanicus in his *Attic History*, but he has not given much space to the subject and he is inaccurate in his dates. At the same time the history of these years will show how the Athenian Empire came into being. (1.97)

LS: Now this is a kind of a new preface of Thucydides, a second preface we can say. But it is a preface only to a sort of digression, which Thucydides regards as necessary because the only one who has dealt with it, Hellanicus, has done with it very inadequately: briefly, and as far as the times are concerned, not exactly. The claim which Thucydides raises here is of course extremely modest. No professor could be more modest than Thucydides is here. He doesn't speak here of a possession for all times, but as some lacuna has been left by his sole predecessor, he thinks that it is proper for him to fill that lacuna. We have here the distinction between the possession for all times and the mere chronicle, which was implied in what I said at the beginning of today's meeting.

Thucydides distinguishes, to repeat, between the truest cause and the superficial causes. The excursus deals with the deeper causes, with the emergence of the Athenian empire. And it is

[i] There is a gap in the tape at this point.
[ii] Warner has: "I shall now describe the use they made of it, both in war and in their management of the League, during the period from the end of the Persian until the beginning of the Peloponnesian War."

rather dull compared with the whole work—the really grand and resplendent parts of Thucydides's *History* are not to be found in these twenty, thirty chapters in which he describes what happened between the Persian and the Peloponnesian War, that is to say between 479 and 431, almost fifty years. The work as a whole we can say consists of two ingredients: a somewhat dull chronicle-like part and a most resplendent one. Now this duality is reflected in a duality occurring in the main part of the work, the narrative of the actions and the speeches. The most famous part of Thucydides's work are doubtless the speeches, and for these speeches he does not take the responsibility. They are the speeches of some of his characters, and so we could perhaps make a proportion: the speeches of the characters to Thucydides's narrative of the war equal to Thucydides's narrative of the war to the chronicle, to the mere chronicle. And there is a very great difficulty to draw the line between Thucydides's narrative, which is the Thucydidean narrative, and the chronicle. One doesn't know when he tells some seemingly trivial things which happened in central Greece, an out of the way place, what this means within the context of the whole Thucydidean history, but a question which one cannot avoid. Now we turn next to chapter 107.

Reader: 107?

LS: Ya.

Reader:
At about this time the Athenians began to build their two long walls down to the sea, one to Phalerum and one to Piraeus. And at the same—

LS: In other words, they continue Themistocles's policy of making Athens safe from the land side. Yes?

Reader:
And at the same time the Phocians started a campaign against Doris, the original homeland of the Spartans, containing the towns of Boeum, Cytinium, and Erineum. When they had captured one of these places the Spartans came to the assistance of the Dorians with a force of 1,500 hoplites of their own and 10,000 of their allies. This force was commanded by Nicomedes, the son of Cleombrotus, acting as deputy for the Spartan King Pleistoanax, who was still underage. The Spartans compelled the Phocians to come to terms and to give back the towns which they had taken. They then began to think of their return journey. If they went by sea, across the Gulf of Crisa, the Athenians would be able to sail up with their fleet and stop them; nor did the route across Geraneia appear to be a safe one, since the Athenians held Megara and Pegae. The passes over Geraneia are difficult ones and were always guarded by the Athenians; moreover, on this occasion the Spartans had information that the Athenians had every intention of preventing them from taking this route. It seemed best, therefore, to stay in Boeotia and wait and see what the safest line of march would be. In this course they were also influenced by the fact that there was a party in Athens who were secretly negotiating with them in the hope of putting an end to the democratic government and preventing the building of the Long Walls. (1.107)

LS: So in other words, there is a connection throughout the war between the axis of foreign policy of Themistocles and later on continued by Pericles and democracy on the one hand, and a

policy which would be called by its opponents [a policy] of appeasement and antidemocratic. Yes?

Reader:
The Athenians marched out against them with their whole army, supported by 1,000 troops from Argos and by contingents from their other allies, making up altogether a force of 14,000 men. They made this attack partly because they thought the Spartans were in difficulties about their way back, and partly because they had some suspicions of the plot to overthrow their democracy. (1.108)

Should I go on?

LS: No. I believe I made a mistake. What I meant was, my figure was . . . I meant another chapter.[iii] . . . in which we see again that Thucydides again alludes to the fact that the war abounded in men-caused miseries and in god-caused miseries. And there is some connection between the two things. I'm very sorry that my writing, which is not very legible in the best of conditions, is particularly illegible today. Let us go on and turn to chapter 110. We cannot possibly follow the whole account of the genesis of the Athenian empire. 110, paragraph 4 to 5.

Reader: This is page 73, about the middle of first paragraph. I'll have to begin with the beginning of 110.

LS: Yes, sure.

Reader:
So, after six years of war, this great venture of the Hellenes came to nothing. Out of the whole great force a few managed to make their way through Libya and find safety in Cyrene, but nearly all were destroyed. Egypt once more passed into the control of the King of Persia, except that Amytraeus, the King in the marshes, still kept his independence. Because of the size of the marshes it was impossible to capture him: also the Egyptians who live in the marshes are the most warlike of their race. Inaros, the King of the Libyans, who had been the person responsible for the Egyptian revolt, was betrayed to the Persians and crucified. Meanwhile, fifty triremes from Athens and the rest of the League had sailed out to relieve the forces in Egypt. They put in at the Mendesian mouth of the Nile, having no idea of what had happened. Here they were under attack from land by the Persian army and from the sea by the Phoenician fleet. Most of the ships were lost, though a few managed to escape. This was the end of the great expedition against Egypt made by the Athenians and their allies. (1.110)

LS: This is a very emphatic conclusion, and something similar is said at the end of the Sicilian expedition which the Athenians made later on in 415 to [4]13. This was an attempt to enlarge the empire towards the east, towards Egypt, and that ended in disaster. And that belongs to the prehistory of the attempt to build the empire, to enlarge the empire in the direction of the west: Sicily. Ya, we must read the immediate sequel of what you just read.

Reader:

[iii] There is a gap in the tape at this point.

Meanwhile Orestes, the son of the King of Thessaly Echecratides, was exiled from his country and persuaded the Athenians to restore him. The Athenians took with them a force of Boeotians and Phocians, who were now their allies, and marched to Pharsalus in Thessaly. Here they dominated the country—though without being able to go far from their camp, being prevented by the Thessalian cavalry—but they failed to capture the town or to secure any other of the objects of the expedition, and they returned home again with Orestes, not having achieved any results. (1.111)

LS: In other words, the Athenians are active in all directions: Egypt, central Greece, northern Greece, and so on. Yes?

Reader:
Shortly afterwards, a force of 1,000 Athenians embarked at Pegae (which was now in Athenian control) and sailed across the coast to Sicyon.[iv] This force was under the command of Pericles, the son of Xanthippus. (1.111)

LS: Let us stop here. That is the first mention of Pericles. And here his father's name, the patronym is mentioned to emphasize the importance from the very beginning. And let us go on here, from here to 118. Ya?

Reader:
It was only a few years later that there took place the events already described—the affair of Corcyra, the affair of Potidaea, and the other occurrences which served as causes for the war between Athens and Sparta.

LS: Now the word which he uses here for "causes," prophasis [πρόφασις], was used when he made the distinction in the sense of "pretext." So the two words have the same meaning, and Thucydides makes a distinction only as it suits him but making it clear that a pretext can very well be a cause and a cause can very well be a pretext. But in extreme cases a distinction between the two things is possible. Yes?

Reader:
The actions of the Hellenes against each other and against foreign Powers which I have just related all took place in a period of about fifty years between the treaty of Xerxes and the beginning of this present war. In these years the Athenians made their empire more and more strong, and greatly added to their own power at home. The Spartans, though they saw what was happening, did little or nothing to prevent it, and for most of the time remained inactive, being traditionally slow to go to war, unless they were forced into it, and also being prevented from taking action in wars on their own territory. So finally the point was reached when Athenian strength attained a peak plain for all to see and the Athenians began to encroach upon Sparta's allies. It was at this point that Sparta felt the position to be no longer tolerable and decided by starting this present war to employ all her energies in attacking and, if possible, destroying the power of Athens. (1.118)

[iv] Strauss corrects the reader's pronunciation of Sicyon.

LS: So that is the link between the description of the fifty years between the Persian [War] and the Peloponnesian War and the description of the fifty years which is given in this section of the first book. You remember that in the second preface Thucydides blames Hellanicus for the brevity and chronological inaccuracy of his Attic chronicle. But he, Thucydides himself, is said to be guilty of the same defects. Modern historians have noted all kinds of unjustifiable brevities and chronological inaccuracies. So one can say that in a manner he imitates Hellanicus, the Attic chronicler. He thus indirectly brings out the difference between his excursus on the fifty years between the Persian War and the Peloponnesian War and his work as a whole. He wrote, as a whole—his work as a whole is not a chronicle, although it has parts which are chronicle-like, and not only this one which we have here. But even if this is true, it doesn't help us to answer the decisive question. The commentator, the most recent commentator on the first part of Thucydides, an Englishman called Gomme, has a long list of the facts which have taken place during the two big wars of which Thucydides didn't speak and of which we know from other sources.[v] And the question arises: Why did Thucydides omit these things? This is a hard question. A necessary question, but a hard question.

We of course have not read the whole thing, especially not a passage of extreme importance for the later developments of the whole war, and that was the rebellion of the Spartan subjects, the so called Helots, in Ithome against Sparta.[vi] And Sparta was helped—that was shortly after the Persian Wars—and the Spartans were helped on that occasion in suppressing their rebellious subjects by the Athenians, because there was an Athenian party which was pro-Spartan. The most famous representative was Cimon, and he was regarded as a perfect gentleman because he was pro-Spartan. These kinds of identifications are possible in all ages, as you probably know. At any rate, the Spartans had to permit the Helots, a considerable part of the Helots, to move away from Ithome in Messenia and they were settled at the coast by the Athenians, where they were outside of the—they were no longer within the power of the Spartans.

Thucydides will make clear later on, or rather he will allude to the fact that Sparta's noble, restraint from aggressive imperialistic policy, as they call it tod today, was due to the fact that Sparta has done imperialism in the former age, when she subjected the Messenians, and she had her hands full with keeping them down. So in other words, they were also as imperialistic as the Athenians, but they are entitled to, they were enabled by the fact that their imperialism was practiced a few centuries back to present themselves now as anti-imperialist liberators of the Greeks, because people don't think of what happened a couple of centuries ago. It at least doesn't have the topicality. That will be made clearer later on.

Now do you still have the place which we read? Can you read the immediate continuation?

Reader:
Though the Spartans had already decided that the truce had been broken by Athenian aggression, they also sent to Delphi to inquire from the god whether it would be wise for them to go to war.

LS: You see, they are pious people. Their prudent judgment that the Athenians had broken the treaty was not sufficient for them. Yes?

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[v] Gomme, *Historical Commentary,* 1, 29-84.
[vi] Thucydides 1.101-103.

Reader:
It is said that the god replied that if they fought with all their might, victory would be theirs, and that he himself would be on their side, whether they invoked him or not. (1.118)

LS: Ya. So in other words, that is a great and important help for them, the promise of the Delphic god, who was among other things also very rich from the many gifts people brought to Delphi.[vii] And there is only one little problem here: the god said . . . "as it is said," *hôs legetai* [ὡς λέγεται]. Why does Thucydides use this qualifying phrase, "as it is said"? We do not have often opportunity to go into Thucydides's use of particular words, but when it is so striking as here, I think we should at least mention it. What would you think is the reason for that? Well, what happens? The Spartans send an embassy to Delphi, and they give this question. Who gives the answer?

Student: The oracle.

LS: Pardon? What does it mean, the oracle?

Student: That's the interpretation . . .

LS: Ya, that there is some speaking individual who gives an answer, perhaps an ambiguous answer. And Gomme, for example, believes that Thucydides indicates by this "as it is said" that this was the pro-war version, the hawkish version of the oracle, and therefore "it is said."[viii] I do not believe that this is a good explanation. I think Thucydides is more precise. The being who *speaks* is the priestess, the Pythia, and that is of course not Apollo. And to say that the Pythia's saying is Apollo's saying, that is really making a big jump, and therefore: "as it is said." That is at the least the way in which I would understand it.

So now it is settled. We have seen how the empire, the Athenian empire, was built up from the period between the Persian and the Peloponnesian War and what kind of an empire it was, how the attempt to continue the Persian War by attacking Egypt, expanding in an easterly direction, failed. And the Athenians were compelled to expand in the first place within mainland Greece and therefore, since mainland Greece is not too large a country, the conflict with Sparta became inevitable. Thucydides has explained this as clearly as he possibly could.

And now there is a new assembly in Sparta. We had one before, as you will remember, in which the Corinthians spoke and then the Athenians, noncommissioned Athenians, took the side of Athens, and then finally a Spartan ephor spoke and settled the issue in favor of war. But this time there is a single speech given only. That doesn't mean that there were no other speeches, but for Thucydides's purposes one speech was sufficient, and that was the Corinthian speech. If Thucydides could have known the New Testament, he could have said he wanted to write the First and Second Corinthians. You may call these two speeches in this way if you want to, but it is a joke, and not a very good one to boot. [Laughter] Now this speech is of course also not

[vii] There is no indication in the text of Thucydides that the Spartans encroached on the treasures deposited in the sanctuary, or that the Delphians would have permitted them to do so.
[viii] Gomme, *Historical Commentary*.

literal. At the end of chapter 119 he says, he uses this same word "about this speech," *toiade* [τοιάδε]. Now I think we should read this speech. Yes?

Reader: This is the bottom of page 77.
"Fellow allies, there is no occasion now for us to make any complaints about the Spartans. They have already voted for war themselves, and they have summoned us here to do the same thing. Indeed, this is what a leader should do—to look after his own interests as everyone else does, but also, in return for all the honour he receives from others, to give a special consideration to the general interest.

"Now, all those of us who have already had dealings with the Athenians do not need to be told that we have to be on our guard against them; but those who live inland or off the main trade routes ought to recognize the fact that, if they fail to support the maritime powers, they will find it much more difficult to secure an outlet for their exports and to receive and return the goods which are imported to them by sea; they should therefore consider carefully what is being said now, and not regard it as something in which they are not concerned; they must be prepared to see that, if the maritime powers are sacrificed, it will not be long before the danger spreads farther, until they, too, are threatened, and that thus this discussion affects them just as much as it affects us. Therefore they should not shrink from the prospect of choosing war instead of peace. Wise men certainly choose a quiet life, so long as they are not being attacked; but brave men, when an attack is made on them, will reject peace and will go to war, though they will be perfectly ready to come to terms in the course of the war. In fact they will neither become over-confident because of their successes in war, nor, because of the charms and blessings of peace, will they put up with acts of aggression. He who thinks of his own pleasures and shrinks from fighting is very likely, because of his irresolution, to lose those very delights which caused his hesitation; while he who goes too far because of a success in war fails to realize that the confidence in which he goes forward is a hollow thing. Many badly planned enterprises have had the luck to be successful because the enemy has shown an even smaller degree of intelligence; and even more frequently has it happened that what seemed to be an excellent plan has ended not in victory, but in disaster. No one can alike conceive and dare in the same spirit of confidence; we are in perfect security when we make our estimates; but in the test of action, when the element of fear is present, we fall short of our ideal." (1.120)

LS: Well, we haven't read the whole speech yet, of course, but still, why do the Corinthians think it necessary to make another speech in favor of the war? The whole thing seems to have been settled in the way in which they want to have settled it. Why do they think it necessary to make another speech? I believe we find our first indication in the passage which we just read about the difference between decision or planning and action. When it comes to action, fear enters and they in the first speech they had to appeal to the indignation of the Peloponnesians and there they had an easy going. But now they have to remind them of the tremendous power of Athens which they have to face and which they have to overcome. Yes?

Reader:
"Now, on this present occasion it is because we are the victims of aggression and because we have adequate reasons that we are going to war; and once we have made ourselves secure from the Athenians we shall at the proper time return to peace. There are many reasons why victory

should be ours. First, we are superior in numbers and in military experience; secondly, one and all and all together we obey the orders that we receive. As for sea-power, in which they are strong, we shall build ours up both from the existing resources of our alliance and also from the funds in Olympia and Delphi.[ix] (1.121)

LS: "In Delphi and Olympia." I believe that is the more reasonable order, because Delphi played such a great role in making the war possible, by the Oracle which he has quoted. So it should really come first. Yes?

Reader:
"If we borrow money from there we shall be able to attract the foreign sailors in the Athenian navy by offering higher rates of pay. For the power of Athens rests on mercenaries rather than on her own citizens; we, on the other hand, are less likely to be affected in this way, since our strength is in men rather than in money. The chances are that, if they once lose a battle at sea, it will be all over with them. And supposing they do manage to hold out, then that will give us more time in which to improve our own naval tactics, and once our skill is on a level with theirs, there can be little doubt about our superiority so far as courage is concerned. They cannot acquire by education the good qualities that are ours by nature: we, on the other hand, by taking pains can abolish the advantage they hold over us in point of skill. It will require money to carry out these projects, and we will contribute money. What an appalling thing to imagine that, while their allies never stop bringing in contributions to maintain their own slavery, we, whose aims are vengeance and surviv al, should hesitate to incur expense in order to prevent this very money that we are saving from being taken from us by the Athenians and then used to make us suffer!" (1.121)

LS: Well, these [statements] are of course obviously a pep talk which makes some sense: if the Athenians will be defeated on the sea, they are lost. And in a way that was true, because the Sicilian disaster, which changed the course of the war, was a maritime defeat. But the Athenians, in a way which surprised everyone, had an amazing resilience. They recovered within a very short time and would have won the war, at least in its defensive aspect, if they had not made certain gross political blunders. But still there is some element of truth in that, that they only must build up a Peloponnesian navy which would be equal to the Athenian navy. And this is not a matter of a few days but of a few years. The warning: You must not expect too much and too quick. Yes?

Reader:
"There are also other ways open to us for carrying on the war. We can foster revolts among their allies—and this is the best means of depriving them of the revenues on which their strength depends. Or we can build fortified positions in their country. And there will be other ways and means which no one can foresee at present, since war is certainly not one of those things which follow a fixed pattern; instead, it usually makes its own conditions in which one has to adapt oneself to changing situations. So, when one enters upon a war, one will be all the safer for keeping one's self-possession: the side that gets over-excited about it is the most likely side to make mistakes.

[ix] Again, despite this suggestion of the Corinthians there is no indication in the text that the Spartans and their allies ever encroached on the treasures of either the Delphic sanctuary or the Olympian one.

"And here is another point to consider. If this was merely a question of boundary disputes between equals and affecting individual cities[x] separately, the situation would not be so serious; as it is, we have Athens to fight, and Athens is so much stronger than any single city[xi] in our alliance that she is capable of standing up to all of us together. So unless we go to war with her and not only in full force but also with every city and every nationality inspired by the same purpose, she will find us divided and will easily subdue us. And let us be sure that defeat, terrible as it may sound, could mean nothing else but total slavery. To the Peloponnese the very mention of such a possibility is shameful, or that so many cities should suffer the oppression of one. If that were to happen, people would say either that we deserved our sufferings or that we were putting up with them through cowardice and showing ourselves much inferior to our fathers; for they brought freedom to the whole of Hellas, while we not only failed to safeguard our own freedom, but also allowed a dictator state to be set up in Hellas—"

LS: The "a tyrannical city," and Athens is a tyrant among the cities. The Peloponnesian War is presented, and this will go through the work, as a continuation of the Persian War. The Persian War was a war of liberation of the Greeks from the Persians. And here the Peloponnesian War is presented by the Peloponnesians as a war of liberation of Greece from the tyrannical city of Athens. Yes?

Reader:
"but also allow a tyrannical city to be set up in Hellas, although in individual cities[xii] we made it a principle to put down despots. Such a policy, in our view, cannot be held to be exempt from three of the greatest mistakes that can be made—lack of intelligence, lack of resolution, or lack of responsibility. Nor do we imagine that you can escape these imputations by claiming that you feel superior to your enemies. This feeling of superiority has done much harm before now; indeed, from the number of cases where it has proved disastrous it has come to be known as something quite different—not superiority, but plain stupidity.

"But there is no need to bring up these complaints from the past except insofar as they may help us in the present." (1.122)

LS: So in other words, we do have very great reasons for being *afraid* of the Athenians. Let us forget for the time being what we said in our first speech, that we must wage war against Athens. Let us think now of the dangers which we encounter while starting the war. And that is developed at some length in this speech. Well, we do not have to read the whole speech—[xiii] . . . Archaeologia, in the description of the olden times in chapters 2 following, but very far back. And there you find the strange conduct of the Oracle, the Oracle assisting, as far as was in its power, a tyrannical attempt, and the Athenians on the other hand, who didn't like tyranny, not paying too much attention to the Oracle and broadly saying that the Pythia had been bribed to give this advice. And at any rate, the Spartans did this whole thing not because they were so terribly pious but because they thought they would in this way discredit Pericles, but they had no

[x] Warner has "states"
[xi] Warner has "state"
[xii] Warner has "states"
[xiii] There is a break in the tape at this point.

success in that. But still Thucydides devotes relatively much space to this story. And I think Gomme makes somewhere the remark that this is very strange that Thucydides takes this so very seriously, because however superstitious the Spartans may have been they cannot themselves have taken this very seriously.[xiv] But it is very hard to draw the line between superstition and religion, and surely a scientific historian should be particularly cautious in drawing that line. But I think we can say that the Athenians would probably say what the Pythia said is not what Apollo said, because these are two different personages, and therefore one doesn't act against Apollo by not believing everything which the Pythia says.

Now this was the first story. Now the Athenians reply in kind. These are the diplomatic exchanges preceding the war. An old commentator has said on the occasion of this passage, "Here the lion laughed," the lion being of course Thucydides. And he's grave and has all the dignity of the political historian, but when he told this story he could not possibly have remained quite serious. So now let us see how Pericles replies to this attempt to discredit him.

Reader: This is 128?

LS: Ya, 128.

Reader:
The Athenians countered the Spartan demand by demanding that the Spartans should drive out the curse of Taenarus. For the Spartans had in the past raised up some helot suppliants from the altar of Poseidon, and had taken them away and killed them. They believed that the great earthquake in Sparta was the result of this. The Athenians also demanded that they should drive out the curse of the Goddess of the Brazen House. The meaning of this was as follows.

After the Spartan Pausanias had been recalled by his government—

LS: Pausanias was the Spartan king, a leader in the Persian War. Yes?

Reader:
for the first time from his command in the Hellespont and had been tried and acquitted, he was not sent out again in an official capacity. However, on his own initiative and without Spartan authority he took a trireme from the town of Hermione and sailed to the Hellespont. He pretended that his intention was to join in the national struggle against Persia, but in fact he went in order to intrigue with the King of Persia, as he had already begun to do before, with the aim of becoming ruler of Hellas. The first occasion when he was able to put the King under an obligation to him was as follows, and it was from this that the whole plot began. When he was in the area before, after the return of Cyprus, he captured Byzantium, which had been held by the Persians and in which some friends and relations of the King had been taken prisoner. At that time he sent back these prisoners to the King, hiding his action from the other allies and making out that the prisoners had escaped. This was done through the agency of Gongylus of Eretria, whom he had put in charge of the prisoners and of Byzantium itself. He also sent Gongylus to the King with the letter, the text of which, as was afterwards revealed, was as follows. (1.128)

[xiv] Gomme, *Historical Commentary*.

LS: Ya, *tade* [τάδε], here he doesn't say "something of this kind," but this is a literal quotation. Yes?

Reader:
"Pausanias, the commander-in-chief of Sparta, wishing to do you a favour, sends you these men whom he has taken prisoner in war. And I propose also, if you agree, to marry your daughter and to bring both Sparta and the rest of Hellas under your control. I consider that, if we make our plans together, I am quite able to achieve this. If therefore you are attracted by this idea, send down to the coast a reliable person through whom we may in future communicate with each other."

So much was revealed in the written message. (1.128)

LS: Ya, "so much." In other words, not "such like." But he went very far, it was very foolish for a Spartan king to entrust so many things to a letter because, as a wise man of a later age said, orally you can say anything, but he didn't know of present-day . . . techniques, but as for writing, you must beware most carefully, because if someone says, "You have said this to me when we were alone," his "yes" has no greater weight than your "no"; but if he has a piece of writing in your handwriting, then you are licked. This great truth, presented with great vigor by Machiavelli[xv] as you can imagine, was of course known to Thucydides also.

By the way, here is another occasion . . . the same thing before at the end of this speech, the last sentence. "If this idea."

Reader: Yes. "If therefore, you are attracted by this idea."

LS: Ya, well, of course there is no word for "idea" in Greek. Ya? That is Locke or Hume and later Greek, but not here. "If something of these things pleases you, then you do it." You know? But we cannot possibly correct all these levities of Mr. Warner. Ya.

Now this Pausanias story is described at great length also in the sequel, because he continued his intrigues later on when he was in Sparta and sent the letters to the king. But then he had one servant—a slave, probably—who saw that the people who were sent off with letters by Pausanias never returned, and he thought maybe that had something to do with the content of the letters. He opened the letter and he found a note to the effect that the man should be killed immediately, and then he betrayed Pausanias. And the end was that Pausanias was executed in that very graceful way in which the Spartans executed their kings. No public execution, of course, but I don't know exactly—well, it is not worth our while unless you are interested in this question of how one can be a strictly loyal monarchist and yet be in favor of regicide, a question discussed very beautifully by John Locke against . . . I think you know, [1]one of these opponents of the killing of kings, and says: If it is necessary to kill a king, it must be done with great respect. And John Locke makes then a somewhat brutal joke: What difference does it make whether you take off the head of the king with great respect or without such respect? Perhaps it does make a difference. If you compare the various revolutions where kings who are ruling heads were assassinated either with respect or without respect, and you see how it affected the spirit of these

[xv] Machiavelli, *Discourses* 3.6.8.

revolutions, you see it does make some difference. But we unfortunately we cannot go into these very interesting questions, and let us turn to 135, paragraph 2.

Reader: This is page 88, beginning paragraph. "With regard to Pausanias' collaboration with Persia, the Spartans."

LS: No, no, read the first sentence, because that is the answer of the Athenians to the demand of the Spartans. "The Athenians."

Reader:
Since the god himself declared that this event constituted a curse the Athenians replied to the Spartan embassy by telling them to drive it out.

LS: So in other words, if you demand from us that we should take care of that pollution by the disregard of the sanctuary, you did something similar at an even earlier time. Hence you are licked by your own methods, and that was apparently Pericles's own answer, who must have known this history of the pollutions of this kind very well. Yes? Now go on.

Reader:
With regard to Pausanias's collaboration with Persia, the Spartans sent an embassy to Athens and, on the basis of evidence which they had discovered at the inquiry, accused Themistocles also of the same crime. They urged the Athenians to punish him in the same way, and the Athenians agreed to do so. At the time, however, he had been ostracized and was living in Argos, though he often travelled about in the rest of the Peloponnese. The Athenians therefore sent back with the Spartans, who were quite willing to help in tracing him, some of their own officers with orders to arrest Themistocles where they found him and bring him to Athens. (1.135)

LS: You see, this is the connection between these two stories, the story of Themistocles and the story of Pausanias. The two greatest Greek leaders in the fight against Persia became traitors to Greece immediately after the war and apparently, at least in the case of Themistocles, this was not wholly unexcusable, because of the conduct of the Greeks. At any rate, these two stories of Pausanias and Themistocles belong together. Now let us read 138.

Reader: This is the bottom of page 89, the paragraph that ends at the bottom.
It is said that the King was greatly struck by this resolution of his and ordered him to do as he wished. In the time that he was waiting—

LS: Oh, "him," namely, Themistocles. Ya?

Reader:
In the time that he was waiting Themistocles learned as much as he could of the Persian language and of the manners of the country. Then after a year he arrived at Court and became a person of importance, indeed more influential there than any Hellene had ever been, partly because of the great reputation he had already, partly because of the hopes he held out of conquering Hellas for the King, but chiefly because he gave constant proof of the ability and intelligence which he possessed.

Indeed, Themistocles was a man who showed an unmistakable natural genius; in this respect he was quite exceptional, and beyond all others deserves our admiration. Without studying a subject in advance and deliberating over it later, but using simply the intelligence that was his by nature, he had the power to reach the right conclusion in matters that have to be settled on the spur of the moment and do not admit of long discussions, and in estimating what was likely to happen, his forecasts of the future were always more reliable than those of others. He could perfectly well explain any subject with which he was familiar, and even outside his own department he was still capable of giving an excellent opinion. He was particularly remarkable at looking into the future and seeing there the hidden possibilities for good or evil. To sum him up in a few words, it may be said that through force of genius and by rapidity of action this man was supreme at doing precisely the right thing at precisely the right moment. (1.138)

LS: Well, I would like to mention only one point. What he translates by "genius" is in Greek "nature." The power of nature, his natural gifts. Well, there is a simple connection, easily recognizable in the eighteenth century as the term "genius" reached its greatest power, between genius and nature. Genius is of course the *natural* gift of a man, and not something acquired. And this praise of Themistocles is unique: there is no man whose nature is praised as highly in Thucydides as Themistocles. Now he was a traitor, there is no question about that, although he had quite a few excuses: the Athenians were very ungrateful and nasty to him. Still, he was a traitor. But for Thucydides this is not a capital crime before a moral tribunal as it would be according to our opinion, I believe. Yes? We must keep this in mind. There are quite a few people—Thucydides helps us and harms us by his words of praise. There are some people highly praised by him, like Nicias, the decent Athenian general is highly praised and not comparable to Themistocles, and other people are highly praised. One must compare these very carefully. And the most important example will of course be Pericles. How does Pericles stand up compared with Themistocles? That is a question to which we do not get an answer from Thucydides; that we would have to figure out ourselves. I believe, Dr. Kass, you want to say something.

Dr. Kass: As you commented on the connection between Themistocles's genius of nature and his having been guilty of treason, you suggested some kind of balance in our judgment of him. But might it not be the case that one is the cause of the other, that Thucydides might want to suggest that he is a traitor perhaps *because* he is—

LS: Ya, that is something which is suggested not by Thucydides but by Xenophon, for example, occasionally. I do not know. I believe in the *Memorabilia*, where Socrates says to some man that [Themistocles], who could find his way wherever he went—whether, I mean, he was in Athens, he was the first among the Athenians. If he went to Persia because the soil was too hot for him in Greece, within a very short time he had impressed the Persian king sufficiently to be listened to. Is that what you mean? So that his great natural gifts enabled him to become a first-rate traitor. Is this what you mean?

Student: Intelligence . . .

LS: I beg your pardon?

Student: . . .

LS: Ya, but that is something which he, which Thucydides regards as very important. So as judgment, judgment of past, present, and future things, that he hits the nail [LS raps on the table] exactly where it must be hit in order to be driven in. Yes?

Student: How much pressure of fear of revolution is present throughout this?

LS: What do you mean by that?

Same Student: Somewhat earlier, starting around 99, the discussion of the revolt going on in the satellite states of Athens, and mentioning of reciprocal, sometimes reciprocal relationships between Athens and Sparta . . . There seems to be some sort of tension throughout all of this, not simply of war, but of civil war.

LS: Civil war? Ya, but revolt is of course not the same as a revolution. Ya? I mean, a revolution: when the word is used today it has some connotations which are wholly absent from revolt or sedition, or whatever the older terms were.

Same Student: There are two questions then, because there are pro-Spartan Athenians, which constitute a potential danger to the democratic government, and there are cities under Athenian rule, which are . . . which are straining aggressively the limits of the Empire.

LS: We will find some examples—for example, Mytilene—later on. Yes?

Same Student: How important is this?

LS: *Very* important, but the word revolution is only the one thing to which I object, because when you use the word "revolution" in this context you have somehow the notion that there is a development in the direction from monarchic or oligarchic governments in the direction of democracies. You know? And the revolutionary movement is progressive. That of course you must keep . . . completely. The democracies of ancient times were not more progressive than the nondemocracies. I mean, if this was the case, it was by sheer accident and not by principle. I know that there is a large literature on this subject which is based on the identification of modern democracy with Athenian democracy, and the most famous specimen is of course the funeral speech of Pericles, which is a praise of the Athenian regime which is in a way a democracy. But Thucydides says that it was not a democracy, it was a democracy only in words. In fact, it was the rule of the first man, namely, of Pericles, the first citizen. And Athens, the democracy of Athens gave democracy a splendor which it didn't have anywhere else. But this does not mean that democracy in ancient times was in any way progressive. It was as much based on slavery and all other niceties of this kind as the monarchies of what have you. And there was no notion of rights of man. You know?

Same Student: So revolt is a much better word?

LS: Ya, sedition or whatever you call it, or subversion. How how did Clarendon call it? Mr. Berns, you should know that. How did they call it in the seventeenth century in England?

Mr. Berns: . . .

LS: No, I mean, civil war, leading to civil war. I don't know.

Student: When the Corinthians . . .

LS: I beg your pardon?

Same Student: When the Corinthians speak at the congress where war is declared, they mention means of carrying on war against the Athenians. One of them is to foster changing over against Athens among the colonies, which is akin to revolt. But that is for them a means of carrying on war.

LS: Ya, but for weakening Athens and not [for] any ideology.

Same Student: Then later they go on to say about war, that one cannot predict what will happen. And they say that each man by himself, the many . . . must adapt to the chance events.

LS: Ya.

Same Student: That mention of revolt was the only kind one had seen.

LS: [To the Reader]: Can you act as an interpreter?

Reader: She says that speaking of revolt in the second Athenian speech is the only mention that seems to be of importance.

Student: The only mention of something like revolution so far has been in that context, it seems, that the Corinthians could use that as a means to war. But they are aware of the effect of war on the many, that each man must adapt for himself.

LS: Ya, but here in this remark in the "second Corinthians," they do not speak of the individual and the *polis* but of the individual *polis* and an alliance of *poleis*, and say that when you have an alliance, as you have in the Peloponnesus, you must—the leader, in this case Sparta—must of course consider her own interests but she must also think for the alliance as a whole, otherwise she will not be able to claim that she is the leader of that group. But the statement in Thucydides which is generally known as *the* classic statement on "quote revolution" is in 3.82 to 83. But this is called by the people who know a few words of Greek, or some who know a lot of Greek, the stasis chapters, the chapters on stasis. "Stasis" means standing up, rising. "*Rising*" [LS raps on the table for emphasis] would be the literal translation. The Easter rising in Dublin, you remember? You have heard of it?[xvi] Risings! That *happens*, and that's very interesting, but that is

[xvi] Strauss refers to the famous rising of Irish nationalists against British rule during Easter week of 1916.

not revolution as we have been taught to understand revolution, because risings can happen from the right as well as from the left, or maybe even from the middle. You know?

Student: Was the word you were asking for before "faction"?

LS: No, I think it was "rising."

Student: Rising?

LS: I believe. Ya.

Student: Or uprising?

LS: Ya. No, Clarendon has a special word for that. What's the title of Clarendon's book?[xvii]

Student: I don't know . . .

LS: No, that is the most famous history of the British Civil War in the seventeenth century. He was the father-in-law of James II. Ya. Let us see one more passage, at the end of chapter 138, the last paragraph there. The end of Themistocles—he died in exile—and what happened to his body. "His bones."

Reader:
It is said that his bones were, at his desire, brought home by his relations and buried secretly in Attica. The secrecy was necessary since it is against the law to bury in Attica the bones of one who has been exiled for treason.

So ended the careers of the Spartan Pausanias and the Athenian Themistocles, who were the most famous people of their day in Hellas. (1.138)

LS: Ya, so the parallel between Pausanias and Themistocles is emphasized explicitly by Thucydides. It is the first picture we get of what the difference between Sparta and Athens means. And there are some—I have read somewhere discussions about the strange character of Thucydides's *History*, that he is not interested in biography except very occasionally, as in these remarks about Pausanias and Themistocles. This is not biography, this is simply an illustration of the chief subject of the whole work, Sparta and Athens, as they reveal themselves in these two outstanding men.

Very soon hereafter, in chapter 139 at the end, there comes the first speech of Pericles, which settles the peace and war issue. The main point [2]of this Periclean speech is: no concessions whatever, because that could be construed as weakness on our part, and the next thing would be that still further demands would be made. There is one—well, there are many historical issues into which we don't have to go, because we are not interested in the Peloponnesian War for its

[xvii] Edward Hyde, Ist Earl of Clarendon (1609-1674), leading British Royalist statesman and historian. His *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* appeared posthumously in 1702-1704.

own sake but for the sake of Thucydides. Let us only read the beginning of the Pericles's speech, because this determines—. Ya?

Reader:
"Athenians," he said, "my views are the same as ever. I am against making any concessions to the Peloponnesians, even though I am aware that the enthusiastic state of mind in which people are persuaded to enter upon a war is not retained when it comes to action." (1.140)

LS: Stop here. He says: I am always of the same opinion, same decision, same judgment, although I know that not "people" but *the* human beings change their minds from what it was before the war when the war started. Which means, in plain English: Pericles is not a mere human being. He is here like a god, looking down on the human beings and sees the difference. He will—there is another statement to this effect [of] Pericles's feeling of superiority to the Athenians and to human beings in another speech of his which we will read on a later occasion. He is unchanged, immutable when he has made up his mind on the basis of his outstanding grasp of the situation. The changes of luck, good or ill luck, will not change his judgment. That is the divine in Pericles according to Pericles's own notion, which is accepted to some extent by Thucydides.

I think perhaps we read a few passages in Pericles's speech the next time, although I don't wish to promise it. There was only a point in Gomme which I noted, which I thought I should mention. Here, Gomme: "The whole excurses on Themistocles is irrelevant to the narrative and so is the greater part of those on Cylon and Pausanias. Thucydides, besides being impelled probably to narrate episodes, which he thought had been inadequately or inaccurately dealt with by others, as in the case of the overthrow of the tyrants in Athens, betrays a strong biographical interest. That interest which he so sternly represses to our great loss and to the detriment of the fuller understanding of the events in his main narrative."[xviii]

I will only say that the interest is in no way biographical, but for Thucydides the Peloponnesian War is a war above all between Athens and Sparta, and in order to understand that you have in the first place to understand what Sparta is and what Athens is, what Sparta stands for and what Athens stands for. And this can be illustrated very well by some characteristic individuals, and they act, again, as abbreviations of Athens or Sparta, respectively. Yes?

Dr. Kass: Yes, on this very point, Mr. Strauss, Themistocles is praised because he has a certain nature—

LS: Ya.

Dr. Kass: not because he is an Athenian, and in a way his nature is such which would make him equally at home perhaps anywhere. So isn't it—but he's not your ordinary Athenian.

LS: No, but Athens seems to have been particularly favorable to the development of the human mind, of genius. This was the view not only of Thucydides but also of Plato and of quite a few others. And today this is of course very unpopular, and sometimes regarded as racism, I believe.

[xviii] Gomme, *Historical Commentary,* 1, 446-447.

But I know from my own experience—I mean, from what I have myself observed in Germany. There are parts of Germany which are very gifted, and then there are other parts which are extremely ungifted. If you take them and make a list of, say, of the fifty greatest Germans, they all come from certain parts of Germany: from Franconia, Saxony and such places, and not from other places. For example, I happen to know a certain part of Germany particularly well because I was born and raised there. It's called Hessen, which is a misleading name, because of the funny dynastic histories, you know? Hessen as a dynastic entity is not the true Hessen, and vice versa. Now the true Hessen hasn't a single man of importance, expect perhaps the Landgraf Philipp the Magnanimous, who introduced the Reformation in Hessen. Those who have seen Henry VIII and his six wives will have seen Philipp there: he came over and tried to enlist the help of Queen Elizabeth. But princesses, you know, they did not always marry in the same family. They were international. But no great German comes from this part of Germany. The great men who were in that university which Philipp founded were all non-Hessians. Some people, like, for example, Jacob Grimm, the great student of the German language, he was not a Hessian—he was a Franconian, which is the district from which Goethe, for example, comes. That's something entirely different. You can also see it by looking at *Volks* art—which is subtle and refined, and which is very crude and primitive. You can see there are different degrees of gifts of human groups. I don't see that this is an immoral assertion—I mean, maybe a wrong assertion, but I don't see that there is anything immoral about it. And therefore I don't hesitate . . . And when the Hessians were called—I don't know why they were called blind in this country.[xix] That had to do, I suppose, with the soldiers, who were sold to the American revolutionaries by the then ruler of Hessen.[xx] But while they were blind, they shot—at what did they shoot? My God, I don't know the English word for that. Misthaufen. Was it Misthaufen?

Students: . . .

Student: It's a compost heap.

LS: Ya. [Laughter] Which is indeed a sign of insufficient intelligence. [Laughter] But it had nothing to do with the question of the giftedness. Well, I hope we meet again in health after the vacation and will continue our reading of Thucydides.

[xix] I have not been able to track down this reference to Hessians as blind.
[xx] It was on the side of the British that the Hessians had fought as mercenaries in the American Revolution.

Session 4: no date

Book 1, chapters 139-46; book 2, chapters 1-39

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —last academic year, in 71/72, on Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, which I couldn't complete as I wanted for reasons of health. Now there is the connection, the combination of Nietzsche and Thucydides is not entirely accidental and due to chance. I think I would like to say a few words about that. In one of his latest writings, *The Dawn of Idols*, Nietzsche said in a chapter which he entitled "What I Owe to the Ancients" that he owed much more to the Latins than to the Greeks. And he is especially critical of Plato, and there occurs a sentence which I have quoted last year more than once, "Plato is boring." The Platonic dialogue, he says, is a terribly self-complacent and childlike kind of dialectics.[i] Nietzsche's cure from all forms of Platonism was at all times Thucydides. Thucydides and perhaps the *Principe* of Machiavelli are closest akin to him through the absolute will not to delude themselves and to see reason in reality and not in "quote reason unquote," and still less in "quote morality." He goes on to say there: "In Thucydides, the culture of the sophists, that's to say the culture of the realists, comes to its perfect expression. Courage in the face of reality distinguishes in the last analysis such natures as Thucydides and Plato. Plato is a coward in the face of reality. Hence, he escapes into the ideal. Thucydides has control of himself; hence, he has control of the things, too, unquote."[ii] And therefore he doesn't have to escape into ideals.

Now that Thucydides is connected with the phenomenon known as sophistry is today very frequently said, and one can easily make a case for that. Generally speaking, of course, the sophists had very bad press until about 1830 or so, when George Grote wrote his History of Greece and attacked Plato's critique of the sophists. And that is a very sober piece of work, culminating in one thesis which I believe is unforgettable for anyone who has read Grote, and he says: "If Plato is right against sophists, then every member of Parliament is a contemptible individual,"[iii] which I think is what Plato meant, but which Grote regarded as the refutation of Plato. But Grote was a very sensible British radical utilitarian and very far from the savagery which Nietzsche sometimes exhibits, but when Nietzsche takes the side of the sophists, it means something very different from what it means when Grote does it. Now in order to put the discussion of this great question [of] Thucydides and the sophists on a proper basis, one would have of course not to rely on a traditional notion of sophistry, even if the route of the tradition is Plato's own teaching, but one would have to form an independent judgment. And the best way to proceed which I know is to start from what Aristotle says about the sophists' political science. He says this thought at the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.[iv] And according to Aristotle the sophists thought that political science, the true political science, is more or less the same as the art of speaking, rhetoric. In other words, sophistry means the belief in the omnipotence of speech. And there is evidence, especially in Plato, in the *Gorgias*, for example, in support of this

[i] Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols, "What I Owe to the Ancients," 2. *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (Viking Penguin, 1954), 557.
[ii] Presumably Strauss's translation.
[iii] George Grote, *History of Greece*, vol. 3 (NY: Harper and Brothers, 1856), chap. 67.
[iv] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.9.20.

view. Now it is perfectly sufficient to remember this point to see that Thucydides had very little to do with the sophists, because his whole book is precisely an attempt to show the limitation of speech: that deed has principles of its own which cannot be reduced to those exhibited by speech.

Now these few remarks which I made give us already an answer to the question which must be uppermost in our mind since Thucydides presents himself for us in the first place as a historian. Is this a sound approach to Thucydides, to regard him as a historian? Now Nietzsche's critique shows already that this is much too narrow a view of Thucydides. Of course a man who writes about the Peloponnesian War would be called a historian, and not only now but for more than two thousand years. But since there are *n* different ways of writing the history of a war, [1]one doesn't say much of the man by saying that he is a historian. What *kind* of historian, if Thucydides is a historian? Is he?

Now I read to you a remark of Nietzche from *Beyond Good and Evil*, Aphorism 30, which will be of some help. Nietzsche says:

"Our highest insights must—and should—sound like follies and sometimes like crimes when they are heard without permission by those who are not predisposed and predestined for them. The difference between the exoteric and the esoteric, formerly known to philosophers—among the Indians as among the Greeks, Persians, and Muslims, in short, wherever one believed in an order of rank and *not* in equality and equal rights—does not so much consist in this, that the exoteric approach comes from the outside and sees, estimates, measures, and judges from the outside, not the inside: what is much more essential is that the exoteric approach sees things from below, the esoteric looks *down from above*. There are heights of the soul from which even tragedy ceases to look tragic; and rolling together all the woe of the world—who could dare to decide whether its sight would *necessarily* seduce us and compel us to feel pity and thus double this woe?"[v]

Now let us apply this to Thucydides. Thucydides speaks of a number of outstanding men. The first outstanding man who comes to sight in his work is, as you will have seen, Pericles, and it is a perfectly defensible view to say Pericles is the perfect statesman as Thucydides saw him. But is this sufficient? Does this reveal to us Thucydides's view of statesmanship, and therefore in particular also of the art of peace and war? Let me use a simile. When there is a variety of mountains whose peaks are hidden by clouds and the men in the valley see all these mountains as equally high because they don't see the peaks, that is the way in which Thucydides presents these men, only with this difference: that he is not a man in the valley, and that he indicates in his way, which is not always easy to follow, the subtle differences between the various men of the first rank, men like Pericles. And the task of the serious student of Thucydides is to find out how Thucydides judged of these various men of the first order he discusses. Now I do not know whether I made clear this point. So when Thucydides praises Pericles—he never blames him—does this mean that he identifies himself, his point of view with that of Pericles, or does he have any reservations? That is a question which we would have to face sooner or later. Rather sooner, because we have now reached the point where Pericles enters the stage. Now I do not know

[v] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, Aphorism 30, translated by Walter Kaufmann (Random House/Vintage Books, 1966), 42.

whether I make myself understood, and therefore I invite your objections, criticism, or however you call it. Yes?

Student: If Pericles is the first of the great . . .

LS: Ya.

Same Student: . . . what of Archidamus?

LS: Well, Archidamus was a very respectable gentleman, but the utmost that Thucydides says to his praise is that he was thought to be a sensible man and a moderate man. He doesn't say that he was sensible and moderate

Same Student: Yet he gives Archidamus a number of speeches, two in particular which are very important.

LS: Yes. After all, Sparta is *the* other power apart from Athens, and especially at the outbreak of the war, Archidamus is the leader of the peace party in Sparta, and therefore he must present the case for peace from the Spartan point of view, but with this and some military actions in the first year of the war, Archidamus has played his role and disappears. And Pericles comes in, we may say, when Archidamus has disappeared. And the great speech[es] that Pericles [makes] are at the end of book 1 and in book 2. But they are not comparable. The men who are comparable to Pericles would be, to mention only one name who has been discussed in the part we have spoken about, was Themistocles, the founder of the Athenian empire. And that is an entirely different story. Archidamus is a very respectable gentleman but not a founder. There are some other people—of some, one doesn't even know whether they existed, because the names are so strange. One of them is called Euphemus—you know, the same man from which the word "euphemism" is derived—and he gives a speech in Sicily, in Camarina, in the sixth book. It's a very impressive speech.[vi] Oh, I'm sorry—oh, yes, that is where it is. And then there is a man called Diodotus, in the third part, third book, opposing Cleon's savage policy against the island of Mytilene.[vii] Of this Diodotus also one doesn't know anything, and the name is "God-sent."[viii] Is this is a creature of Thucydides's fancy, or did such a Diodotus exist? We don't know. Well, I believe a sensible reader of Thucydides would not be particularly interested in this detective question, whether he existed or not, and would rather try to see what Diodotus stands for. And maybe these people like Euphemus and Diodotus and some others are as important, or more important than Pericles. One must be openminded. Mr. Berns?

Mr. Berns: The remark you made about Grote's *reductio ad absurdum*: it would seem that I thought it would require a little more than the . . . in the way that these that some of the sophists seem to be on the whole.

LS: Well, this was not an exhaustive summary or criticism of Grote, but it was in a way a caricature of Grote. But Grote was a very respectable man and a sensible man; but still, from

[vi] Thucydides 6.81-87.
[vii] Thucydides 3.41-48.
[viii] Actually, "Zeus sent."

Plato's point of view one would be compelled to present Grote's vindication of the sophists in the terms which I suggested. It's a long time that I have read him. I don't know whether you have ever read him. You should read him.

Mr. Berns: [Laughs] No, but I mean, I just wonder if this comparison is really fair, because I should think that at least some of the members of Parliament are very much aware of the limitation of speech.

LS: Oh, ya, sure. Sure, sure, sure. No, I mean, what he has—

Mr. Berns: They used to be trained in classics, quite a few of them.

LS: Oh, yes. What Grote has in mind in his criticism of Plato is that if the reasoning used by Socrates, say, in the *Gorgias* or *Meno*, against the famous Athenian statesmen is valid, what will become of William Pitt, the Older or the Younger,[ix] and all the other great English statesmen? They would be in the doghouse, all of them! And since very few people are willing to draw this conclusion, they should be careful to appeal to the authority of Plato. Not everyone has the right to use this authority.

Student: . . . but even Plato can be called sophist.

LS: Sure!

Same Student: That's what he says. That's what—

LS: That is quite right. Ya, ya. That is one of the—very good!—that is one of the beauties of Grote's criticism when he quotes some German pedants who use Plato's criticism of the sophists and then at the same time they give examples of how Plato pays them with their own coin by using the same kind of sophistic arguments. So what remains of Plato's criticism of the sophists? Yes. Not a bad point. I think that Grote is still remembered, and rightly. That was among the historical books, I mean of the nineteenth century, I think one of the most respectable ones. As you know, he was not a scholar merely, he was also a member of Parliament [laughter] and he looked on this whole issue from both points of view, from the point of view of the scholar, the philosopher—he was a utilitarian—and from the point of view of the practical politician and simply says, "You can't make politics on this Platonic basis." And I believe the first to agree with him would have been Plato himself. But it is worth reading. It's a very long book, I believe it is about four hundred pages.

Student: Four volumes of Plato, four volumes, four.

LS: Four—

Student: Four volumes on Plato are written by Grote.

[ix] William Pitt the Elder, First Earl of Chatham (1708-1778), Prime Minister 1766-1768; William Pitt the Younger, his son (1759-1806), Prime Minister 1783-1801 and 1804-1806, widely regarded as the greatest British statesmen of the eighteenth century.

LS: Yes, then he wrote a book, "Socrates and his Companions," I think.[x]

Same Student: Maybe, yes, that's what I mean.

LS: Yes, well, I had read him in former times, but it was a long time and I speak entirely from—. Yes?

Student: Mr. Strauss, when you read the aphorism from *Beyond Good and Evil*, did you mean to imply anything about pity in Thucydides, or the absence of pity in Thucydides?

LS: No, Thucydides was a compassionate man. And if any proof were needed, you only would have to read the story of the small town of Mycalessus. The Athenians had sent home Thracian mercenaries, because this was a budgetary business, you know, they believed they didn't need them and so they sent them home, and on the way home they came to a place called Mycalessus. And there they tried to get something instead of the money which they had not gotten by killing the schoolchildren who just came out of school when they came into this very small town. It was a very barbarous action. And if you read the description, you see that Thucydides is as shocked as anyone could be about it, and to say nothing of the misery of the Athenians in Sicily after they had lost the war there. Surely he had compassion, but whether compassion was for him the sole criterion of goodness, that's an entirely different question. This, I think, is a view which came to the fore in political philosophy only in the eighteenth century, where goodness was identified with being compassionate. You know this can lead to all kinds of violent[xi] things—the famous examples of compassion, of this extreme view of compassion is Don Quixote, who sees the galley and the slaves—you know, murderers and other kinds of people being brought to the galleys, and then he has compassion with these poor men and liberates them, and without thinking what they are going to do after having been liberated.[xii] So there are other considerations apart from compassion which have to be considered.

Well, last time we read part of book 1 and discussed it, and we came to the end of book 1. And we should read a few passages there. Let us turn to chapter 139, end. The end of chapter 139. This is Pericles's first speech. Can you read just the very end of chapter 139?

Reader:
The Athenians then held an assembly in order to debate the matter, and decided to look into the whole question once and for all and then to give Sparta her answer. Many speakers came forward and opinions were expressed on both sides, some maintaining that war was necessary and others saying that the Megarian decree should be revoked and should not be allowed to stand in the way of peace. Among the speakers was Pericles, the son of Xanthippus, the leading man of his time among the Athenians and the most powerful both in action and in debate. His advice was as follows.

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[x] George Grote, *Plato and the Other Companions of Socrates* (4 vols.) (1888).
[xi] It is not clear whether Strauss says "violent"; this is something of a guess.
[xii] Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, part 1, chapter 22.

LS: Ya, "*about* as follows." Of course not a literal speech, as we have seen also in many other cases. It is a speech framed by Thucydides rendering Pericles's thought, but not taping it . . . And you see what he says here, "he was most powerful to speak, and to act." That's much greater praise than the praise of Archidamus, the Spartan king, which we have read earlier. There is no one, with the exception of Themistocles, [who] has been praised as highly as Pericles up to now.

Now we read a few passages, the very beginning of the speech, of Pericles's speech. It's the first time that Pericles speaks, and there is only, there was of course also a peace party in Athens, but Thucydides doesn't give the specimen of *their* position because it was too *un*interesting. It was there, but was politically irrelevant. The relevant party was the war party led by Pericles. How does he begin?

Reader:
"Athenians," he said, "my views are same as ever: I am against making any concessions to the Peloponnesians, even though I am aware that the enthusiastic state of mind in which people are persuaded to enter upon a war is not retained when it comes to action, and that people's minds are altered by the course of events." (1.140)

LS: And let us stop here. Now the only thing which I must note regarding the translation is that he doesn't speak of people but of human beings: human beings change their minds. First they are very angry when insolent demands are made of them, but then when they see the sacrifices they have to bring, then they retract. Human beings. There are other beings, not human beings, who do not change their minds so easily, and that can only be gods. Pericles is as immutable, as unchangeable as the gods. In in that position he opposes the Athenians. There is no mention of god or gods in this whole speech, which is noteworthy because gods have been mentioned in earlier speeches. For example, in the first speech of the Corinthians in chapter 71, and in the Athenian speech in Corinth in chapter 78, and in the speech of the ephor Sthenelaidas in chapter 86. On the other hand, this perfect gentleman, Archidamus, does not refer to the gods because what he says is so humanly sensible that there is no need for bringing in the gods.

Now what Pericles does in this speech: he said he lays down the principles of his strategy. The Athenians must sacrifice the countryside because they don't have a sufficient land army. And the Spartans and the other Peloponnesians will enter Attica and devastate it, and induce the slaves to run away from their Athenian masters. This cannot be helped, this is the price which Athens has to pay. Athens' empire is a sea empire and based on the navy and based on money, and that can easily be preserved, even if the whole of Attica, with the exception of Athens herself, of course, is devastated. That he develops at length here. Now let us see some more passages, chapter 144. Ya?

Reader:
"I could give you many other reasons why you should feel confident in ultimate victory, if only you will make up your minds not to add to the empire while the war is in progress, and not to go out of your way to involve yourselves in new perils. What I fear is not the enemy's strategy, but our own mistakes."

LS: So you see Pericles, in contradistinction to the Athenian demos, who later on in the Peloponnesian War start on that disastrous adventure of the Sicilian expedition, and he may have thought of something of this kind, what the Athenians would be so foolish to start while this war was going on. The war must be strategically defensive, and then Athens can easily win it because the others cannot build up a navy which could become dangerous to Athens within a few years. It would take a very long time, and in the meantime the others would get tired of it, to say nothing of the fact that they don't have capital. Yes? Go on, read on this section.

Reader:
"However, I shall deal with all this on another occasion when words and action will go together. For the present I recommend that we send back the Spartan ambassadors with the following answer that we will give Megara access to our market and our ports—"

LS: You may recall that this was one of the demands of the Spartans, that the Athenians should retract the so-called Megarian Decree, and they said: Very well, we will do that, provided you do the same, or the corresponding thing. Yes?

Reader:
"if at the same time Sparta exempts us and our allies from the operation of her orders for the expulsion of aliens (for in the treaty there is no clause forbidding either those orders of hers or our decree against Megara); that we will give their independence to our allies if they had it at the same time that we made the treaty and when the Spartans also allow their own allies to be independent and to have the kind of government each wants to have rather than the kind of government that suits Spartan interests. Let us say, too, that we are willing, according to the terms of the treaty, to submit to arbitration, that we shall not start the war, but that we shall resist those who do start it. This is the right reply to make and it is the reply that this city of ours ought to make. We must realize that this war is being forced upon us, and the more readily we accept the challenge the less eager to attack us will our opponents be. We must realize, too, that, both for cities and for individuals, it is from the greatest dangers that the greatest glory is to be won. When our fathers stood against the Persians they had no such resources as we have now; indeed, they abandoned even what they had, and then it was by wisdom rather than by good fortune, by daring rather than by material power, that they drove back the foreign invasion and made our city what it is today."

LS: He refers to Themistocles's policy to abandon the city of Athens and to bring the Athenian population which could be armed on the ships and the women and children on the island, the island of Euboea, and in this way to resist the Persian invasion. And this is a great model. Yes?

Reader:
"We must live up to the standard they set: we must resist our enemies in any and every way, and try to leave to those who come after us an Athens that is as great as ever." (1.144)

This was Pericles' speech.

LS: Ya, well, again: "He said things of this kind." Ya? It's not literal . . . emphasis. Now finally, let us read the last chapter of the first book.

Reader:
These, then, were the causes of complaint and the differences which occurred between the two powers before the outbreak of war and which arose immediately from the affairs of Epidamnus and of Corcyra. There was still communication between the two states, and people travelled to and fro without heralds, though with considerable suspicion, since events were going on which amounted to a cancellation of the treaty and an excuse for open war. (1.146)

LS: So this is the end of book 1, the end of the introduction. And one can say that the introduction deals with everything which happened prior to the outbreak of the war and relevant to the war, from the affair of Epidamnus on until the failure of the final negotiations. This much about book 1, and we will now turn to book 2. Is there any point you would like to bring up? Oh, yes?

Dr. Kass: Mr. Strauss, the end of Pericles's speech refers to the forefathers—

LS: Ya.

Dr. Kass: and to the descendants, and the beginning of—

LS: "The forefathers" means the generation of the Persian War, two generations ago.

Dr. Kass: Right. And I think we'll come to later in the funeral oration, where Pericles also begins speaking of the ancestors.

LS: Yes.

Dr. Kass: Could you comment here on how he regards the Athens of his day in rank with respect to—

LS: He is saying—

Dr. Kass: Does he see this as a kind of peak which needs to be maintained, is Athens superior to the Athens of the—

LS: That he doesn't say here. For his present purposes, it is perfectly sufficient if the Athenians would act as courageously as they did in the Persian War. They don't have to be superior to them, but in other ways they *are* superior. But there's no need to mention that because here he's only concerned with inducing them to act as courageously as they did under Themistocles in 480. But the question which you raise is very pertinent, but we cannot take it up before we have turned to the funeral speech. Yes?

Student: Thucydides has Pericles say at one point in his first speech that if he thought he could persuade the Athenians to march against the Spartans and lay waste their land, he would speak to that end; that is, for Athens to go out and attack Sparta, that this would be their form of reply,

ideally.[xiii] But that it is only that he can't *persuade* them to that end that he doesn't speak to that end. Is that, is Thucydides putting this in for—I mean, is there some real purpose in that theme in included in the speech? Are we supposed to see something about Pericles?

LS: No, Athens could not have won the war, not even defensively as a land war. That was out of the question because the Spartans and the Peloponnesians altogether, they are much more powerful as a land army than the Athenians. There was no possibility. The only way in which Athens could wage the war was as a maritime war.

Same Student: But it would seem to me that Pericles is contradicting himself.

LS: Why? Because he implies that it would be better if he could prevent the invasion of Attica? Surely it would be better, but it is fantastic. I mean, that's a necessary sacrifice which the Athenians have to bring to allow the devastation of Attica in order to make clear to the Spartans and their allies that they will never win the war that way because Athenians don't *esteem* their landed estates as high[ly] as their empire. We must read this in the context, I believe. So then let us turn to book 2. Let us read the very beginning.

Reader:
We now come to the actual outbreak of war between Athens and her allies on the one side and the Peloponnesians and their allies on the other. There was now no further communication between the two sides except through heralds. Once the war began it continued without intermission. I have recorded the events as they occurred each summer and each winter.

LS: "According to summer and winter." Ya? The summer means the campaigning season, and winter the season in which no campaigning is possible. Ya? And the simple point is: there was no calendar, no universally accepted calendar available by the Greeks. The Spartans had a different calendar than the Athenians had. And so Thucydides has in order not to write merely for Athenians, [he] had to make, elaborate a calendar of his own, and that was according to summer and winter, while this and this man was the archon who gave his name to the year in Athens, and then that man was an ephor giving his name to the year in Sparta, and so on. But he cannot write a Spartan or an Athenian, or any other particular Greek city history, but it must be universal—for Greeks, not beyond. We usually forget that, because we know from our school days or even from later days that the Peloponnesian War started in 431 and ended in 404, because that was figured out by generations of scholars in the sixteenth century and we build on that and think or regard this as a kind of a divine relation. It was worked out with great labors and with possibilities of errors, not completely evolved. But Thucydides didn't have that; he had to make a calendar of his own.

Now, but perhaps what is more interesting is this. When you compare this very beginning of the war, beginning of book 2, with the beginning of the whole work, Thucydides speaks here of the Athenians and Peloponnesians, whereas at the very beginning he had spoken of the Peloponnesians and Athenians. He changes the order. The reason in my opinion is that in the very beginning he had spoken of himself, of Thucydides of Athens, and describing the war of these two parties, and then of course he brings in the Peloponnesians first in order to indicate his

[xiii] This is not at all what Pericles says; cf. Thucydides 1.143.5.

impartiality. But now this question is disposed of somehow. We know now that he is impartial, and therefore he speaks of— [xiv] who is right from that moment on? The unjust Thebans who unjustly assailed Plataea, or the just Plataeans who unjustly killed prisoners whom they had promised the preservation of their rights? That is, that is politics. There are always such situations, in all wars that happens. And that is the background of Thucydides's whole history, the awareness that these things always happen, and he explains this in detail, how this came about, this error, if it can be called an error.

Now let us turn to chapter 7, because this was the act which began the war was the Theban attack on Plataea. But then what was the situation in Greece altogether at that time? This is described in chapter 7. Will you read that, please?

Reader:
In this affair of Plataea the treaty had quite obviously been broken, and now the Athenians made ready for war, as did the Spartans and their allies. They planned to send embassies to the King of Persia and any other foreign power from whom they hoped to—

LS: Ya, "foreign power" is weak, it's too weak as a translation. "The barbarians," in other words, the whole notion of the Persian War, the defense of Greece against the barbarians is out of the question. Each party, side would be delighted to get the King of Persia on their side against these *bastards*, the Greek bastards. Yes?

Reader:
and they tried to ally themselves with other Hellenic states who were not yet committed to either side. The Spartans, in addition to the fleet they had already, ordered more ships to be built by the states in Italy and Sicily who were on their side: the number ordered was in proportion to the size of each city, and the total was to be a fleet of 500 ships. These cities were also asked each to provide a certain sum of money. Meanwhile, and until their preparations were complete, they were to remain neutral and to allow single Athenian ships to enter their harbours. The Athenians, on their side, tightened their hold on their existing allies and, in particular, sent embassies to places in the neighbourhood of the Peloponnese—to Corcyra, Cephallenia, Acarnania, and Zacynthus—realizing that they could carry on the war all round the Peloponnese if they could establish firm and friendly relations with these places.

Nothing in their designs was on a small or mean scale: both sides put everything into their war effort. This was natural enough. At the beginning of an undertaking the enthusiasm is always greatest, and at that time both in the Peloponnese and in Athens there were great numbers of young men who had never been in a war and were consequently far from unwilling to join in this one. (2.7-8)

LS: Very important point. There hadn't been a war since about almost fifty years.[xv] [There was] a whole generation which didn't know what war means, and they were trigger-happy, as we

[xiv] There is a break in the tape at this point.
[xv] Strauss exaggerates. There had been no war comparable to the Persian one, but the Thirty Years Treaty currently in place between the Athenian and Spartan confederacies dated only to 446/445 BCE and had been preceded by fifteen years of strife between the two (cf. Thucydides 1.97-115).

would say. That is part of the prehistory of the war. And the other side of it is of course the motives of which we will speak, that the Athenian empire is now regarded as the enemy of Greek freedom, as Persia was during the Persian wars, and therefore one must wage the war for the sake of Greek freedom. This is the background. Read to the end of chapter 8, please.

Reader:
Meanwhile all the rest of Hellas hung poised on the event, as the two leading cities came together in conflict. There were all kinds of prophesies and all kinds of oracular utterances being made both in the cities that were about to go to war and in other places as well. Then, too, there was an earthquake in Delos just before this time—a thing that had never happened before in the memory of the Hellenes. This was said and thought to be a sign of impending events; and if anything else of the same kind happened to occur, its meaning was always carefully examined.

People's feelings were generally very much on the side of the Spartans, especially as they proclaimed that their aim was the liberation of Hellas. States and individuals alike were enthusiastic to support them in every possible way, both in speech and action, and everyone thought that unless he took a personal share in things the whole effort was being handicapped. So bitter was the general feeling against Athens, whether from those who wished to escape from her rule or from those who feared that they would come under it.

These were the preparations and this the state of mind at the outbreak of war.

LS: So let us keep this in mind: a whole generation which had no experience of war, and then the aim, the noble aim, the liberation of Greece from Athenian tyranny. This was the way in which the war was looked upon by the majority of Greeks. And Thucydides is impartial enough to mention this point, and not say simply: Athens is the great school of Greece, and Greece is the school of mankind; ergo, every sensible man must be on the side of Athens. That is not what Thucydides says. Yes.

Now we come to something strange, for which we have no parallel, in chapter 13. There is a second speech of Pericles, but this speech is not given in direct speech but Thucydides writes it in his own words and does not pretend that Pericles gave this speech. Well, we don't have to read the whole thing; we read only a few passages. Let us see, paragraph 3 of chapter 13.

Reader: This book isn't broken down. Can you give the subject matter?

LS: Where he advised them to be of good courage.

Reader:
They were not to go out and offer battle, but were to come inside the city and guard it. Their navy, in which their strength lay, was to be brought to the highest state of efficiency, and their allies were to be handled firmly, since, he said, the strength of Athens came from the money paid in tribute by her allies, and victory in war depended on a combination of intelligent resolution and financial resources. Here Pericles encouraged confidence, pointing out that, apart from all other sources of revenue, the average yearly contribution from the allies to Athens amounted to 600 talents, then there still remained in the Acropolis a sum of 6,000 talents of coined silver.

This reserve fund, at its maximum, had been 9,700 talents. It had been drawn on to pay for the Propylaea and other public buildings, and for Potidaea. In addition to this there was the uncoined gold and silver in offerings made either by individuals or by the city;[xvi] there were the sacred vessels and furniture used in the processions and in the games; there were the spoils taken from the Persians, and other resources of one kind or another, all of which would amount to no less than 500 talents. To this he added the money in the other temples which might be used and which came to a considerable sum, and said that, if they were ever really reduced to absolute extremities, they could even use the gold on the statue of Athena herself. (2.13)

LS: The statue is not in the text: the goddess herself. So Pericles in this speech, which is a peculiar speech, does speak of the goddess—of course Athena, but this is indistinguishable from the statue. That is, Pericles—you see that he takes the fact of life that Athena is *the* Athenian goddess without any questioning, but he knows also its financial value and that one can use it on account of its financial value if the going gets tough. I thought that is worth considering.

So in the sequel he describes now what happens after the war began, and the Peloponnesians entered Attica and devastated the countryside, the country people enter the city of Athens.And this meant a complete upheaval. That is discussed in Chapters 15 to 16. I think we should read that, because that is a very important supplement to what Thucydides had said in the Archaeology in the account of the ancient times which he had given in the first book. Chapters 15 to 16.

Reader:
Indeed, from very early times this way of life had been especially characteristic of the Athenians. From the time of Cecrops and the first kings down to the time of Theseus the inhabitants of Attica had always lived in independent cities, each with its own town hall and its own government. Only in times of danger did they meet together and consult the King at Athens; for the rest of the time each state looked after its own affairs and made its own decisions. There were actually occasions when some of these states made war on Athens, as Eleusis under Eumolpus did against King Erechtheus. But when Theseus became King he showed himself as intelligent as he was powerful. In his—

LS: Do you see? He is also praised rather highly, more highly than Archidamus. He doesn't say he was *thought* to be, but he was. Yes?

Reader:
In his reorganization of the country one of the most important things he did was to abolish the separate councils and governments of the small cities and to bring them all together into the present city of Athens, making one deliberative assembly and one seat of government for all. Individuals could look after their own property just as before, but Theseus compelled them to have only one centre for their political life – namely, Athens—and, as they all became Athenian citizens, it was a great city that Theseus handed down to those who came after him. From him dates the feast of the Union of Attica which the Athenians still hold today in honour of Athene—

LS: Ya. "Of the goddess," The goddess is of course in this case Athena. Yes?

[xvi] Warner has "state"

Reader:
still hold today in honour of the goddess and pay for out of public funds. Before this time the city consisted of the present Acropolis and the part below it facing southward. (2.15)

LS: And so on. So that we are reminded of Athenian past, the remote past before Athens was a single political community, before Theseus settled together these various small towns and created the city of Athens. We are reminded of it at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. And there are a few more passages which are of interest for our purposes. Let us read chapter 17, the first two paragraphs.

Reader:
When they arrived at Athens a few had houses of their own to go to and a few were able to find shelter with friends or relations; but most of them had to settle down in those parts of the city that had not been built over and in the temples and in the shrines of the heroes—except in the Acropolis, in the temple of Eleusinian Demeter, and some other places that were strictly forbidden. Below the Acropolis is some land called "the Pelasgian ground", and this land was under a curse that it should not be inhabited; also there was a fragment of a Pythian oracle forbidding anything of the kind, which said: "Better for Athens to leave the Pelasgian quarter alone." Nevertheless, owing to the sudden pressure of events, this quarter was now built over. It appears to me that the oracle came true in a way that was opposite to what people expected.

LS: You see, Thucydides is perfectly willing to believe in oracles under certain conditions, and he makes it clear what the conditions are in this particular case. Yes?

Reader:
It was not because of the unlawful settlement in this place that misfortune came to Athens, but it was because of the war that the settlement had to be made. The war was not mentioned by the oracle, though it was foreseen that if this place was settled, it would be at a time when Athens was in difficulties. A number of people also took up their quarters in the towers along the walls and, in fact, wherever they could find space to live in. For when they all came into the city together there was not enough room for them, though later they shared out sections of the Long Walls and most of Piraeus and settled there. (2.17)

LS: So I mention only that this situation, as it developed in Athens because of the coming in of the rural population, played a great role in making the plague such a miserable thing, as he will make clear later on. And he will speak of that later, in the second half of book 2.

One more passage, chapter 22, paragraph 3. I have no doubt that we omit quite a few things which are worth reading, but we have to omit a lot if we want to get a notion of this. Let us read chapter 22.

Reader:
Pericles was convinced of the rightness of his own views about not going out to battle, but he saw that for the moment the Athenians were being led astray by their angry feelings. So he summoned no assembly or special meeting of the people, fearing that any general discussion

would result in wrong decisions, made under the influence of anger rather than of reason. Meanwhile—

LS: You see, that is not participatory democracy because if they were to come together and have a popular assembly at this time and they are angry about the devastation of Attica, they will make all kinds of foolish decisions. And Pericles, more far-seeing, says [that] they won't have a popular assembly until the anger has been vented in more rational ways. Yes?

Reader:
Meanwhile he saw to the defences of the city and kept things as quiet as he could. He did, however, constantly send out cavalry in order to stop enemy patrols from breaking into the country near the city and doing harm. One minor cavalry battle took place at Phrygia between a squadron of Athenians with Thessalian support and the Boeotian cavalry. The Athenians and Thessalians had the better of this engagement until the hoplites came up in support of the Boeotians, when the Athenians and Thessalians retreated, leaving a few dead behind. However, they recovered the bodies on the same day without asking for an armistice. On the next day the Peloponnesians put up a trophy. The help that Athens received from Thessaly was in accordance with the terms of the old treaty. The following Thessalian peoples came: the Larissaeans, the Pharsalians, the Cranonians, the Pyrasians, the Gyrtonians, and the Pheraeans. The contingent from Larissa was commanded by Polymedes and Aristonous, each leading one division. Menon was the commander of the Pharsalians, and the other cities also each had their own commanders. (2.22)

LS: I simply do not know whether this Meno from Pharsalus was the same who plays such a role in Plato's dialogue, you know. I simply don't know, and I have no easy access to a commentary which would clarify the identity of this Meno.[xvii] This is only in passing.

So now we—the battles begin, on a minor scale, but still some people are killed. And then after this first killing in a land battle there comes next the greatest, most famous speech of Pericles, the funeral speech in chapter 34, and I think we should turn to that. That is probably—that may very well be the most famous, surely the most resplendent passage in Thucydides's *History*. And quite a few people form their notions of Athens, Athenian democracy on the basis of these few chapters. With what right remains to be seen. Chapter 34. Yes?

Reader:
In the same winter the Athenians, following their annual custom, gave a public funeral—

LS: No, no, "following the ancestral law." That's important. Now there is a certain difficulty which modern historians have figured out, that this law was not as old as it is presented here. Well, as if Thucydides is not free to call a law ancestral when it is generally regarded as ancestral even if it isn't ancestral. Yes?

Reader:

[xvii] It is generally held that the Menon after whom Plato's *Meno* is named was not the same as this one but the same as the Menon who appears in Xenophon's *Anabasis*: a member of the same leading Pharsalian family but a generation younger than the Menon named by Thucydides and so most likely his son.

following their ancestral tradition,[xviii] gave a public funeral for those who had been the first to die in the war. These funerals are held in the following way: two days before the ceremony the bones of the fallen are brought and put in a tent which has been erected, and people make whatever offerings they wish to their own dead. Then there is a funeral procession in which coffins of cypress wood are carried on wagons. There is one coffin for each tribe, which contains the bones of members of that tribe. (2.34)

LS: "Tribe" meaning here a political division of Athens, the city of Athens being divided into *phylae*, into tribes. Ya. Now let us now turn to the beginning. And it is a part of the ritual, the ancestral ritual that an outstanding Athenian is asked to make the funeral speech on such an occasion, and in this year Pericles is chosen for that purpose. Now let us see what Pericles does in chapter 35.

Reader:
"Many of those who have spoken here in the past have praised the institution of this speech at the close of our ceremony. It seemed to them a mark of honour to our soldiers who have fallen in war that a speech should be made over them. I do not agree. These men have shown themselves valiant in action, and it would be enough, I think, for their glories to be proclaimed in action, as you have just seen it done at this funeral organized by the city.[xix] Our belief in the courage and manliness of so many should not be hazarded on the goodness or badness of one man's speech. Then it is not easy to speak with a proper sense of balance, when a man's listeners find it difficult to believe in the truth of what one is saying. The man who knows the facts and loves the dead may well think that an oration tells less than what he knows and what he would like to hear: others who do not know so much may feel envy for the dead, and think the orator over-praises them, when he speaks of exploits that are beyond their own capacities. Praise of other people is tolerable only up to a certain point, the point where one still believes that one could do oneself some of the things one is hearing about. Once you get beyond this point, you will find people becoming jealous and incredulous. However, the fact is that this institution was set up and approved by our forefathers, and it is my duty to follow the tradition and to do my best to meet the wishes and the expectations of every one of you."

LS: "Tradition" is in Greek *nomos* [νόμος], "law." So there is an ancestral law to the effect that an outstanding citizen must give this funeral speech for the fallen soldiers. This year it is Pericles. How does he begin? He obeys the law! He gives the funeral speech. But not without *criticizing* that ancient law. You see? That is a new spirit in Athens, that the ancient is no longer as venerable as it was in the past and [this is] very remarkable. Yes. And now let us see how he goes on.

Reader:
"I shall begin by speaking about our ancestors, since it is only right and proper on such an occasion to pay them the honour of recalling what they did. In this land of ours there have always been the same people living from generation to generation up till now, and they, by their courage and their virtues, have handed it on to us, a free country. They certainly deserve our praise. Even more so do our fathers deserve it. For to—"

[xviii] Warner has "custom"
[xix] Warner has "by the state"

LS: Even more than that the founders. Ya? "Our fathers" meaning the men who fought in the Persian War.[xx] They deserve still higher praise than the ancient ones, the ancients, the founders of Athens. Yes?

Reader:
"For to the inheritance they had received they added all the empire we have now, and it was not without blood and toil that they handed it down to us of the present generation. And then we ourselves, assembled here today, who are mostly in the prime of life, have, in most directions, added to the power of our empire and have organized our city[xxi] in such a way that it is perfectly well able to look after itself both in peace and in war.

"I have no wish to make a long speech on subjects familiar to you all: so I shall say nothing about the warlike deeds by which we acquired our power or the battles in which we or our fathers gallantly resisted our enemies, Greek or barbarian.[xxii] What I want to do is, in the first place, to discuss the spirit in which we faced our trials and also our constitution and the way of life which has made us great. After that I shall speak in praise of the dead, believing that this kind of speech is not inappropriate to the present occasion, and that this whole assembly, of citizens and barbarians[xxiii]—"

LS: No, "foreigners"!

Reader:
"foreigners, may listen to it with advantage." (2.36)

LS: Ya, so this is important. This is a pan-Hellenic speech. There are non-Athenians present, who are to be informed authoritatively about what Athens stands for. And you see there is a certain increase in Athens, from very small beginnings when it was not yet a city and when it was settled together by Theseus; then there came the later development, especially the Persian War, and the beginning of the Athenian navy, and then the empire. But *we*, the present generation, we are at the top, the peak. So the point of view of Pericles, of Thucydides's Pericles is the same as that of Thucydides himself. Just as Thucydides in his description of the Archaeology, of the ancient times, ascended this progress from very small beginnings to great power. This is the same point of view which is shared by Pericles, and to that extent Thucydides and Pericles belong together. But whether they belong together in all respects, that remains to be seen; that cannot be said on the base of this single chapter. Is this clear? Now what he wants—so Athens is now at the top of the world, and in order to make clear what this means and to what Athens owes this greatness, he speaks first of what he translates by the Athenian constitution.

[xx] In fact, by "our fathers" Pericles means not those who had fought in the Persian War (whom he might have called "our grandfathers") but the subsequent generation who had founded the Athenian empire.
[xxi] Warner has "State"
[xxii] Warner has "foreign"
[xxiii] Warner has "foreigners." The reader apparently assumes that the word in Thucydides's original had been "barbarians," and that Warner's "foreigners" had been his usual mistranslation of that term. Strauss corrects the reader: here Pericles had indeed spoken of [Greek] foreigners rather than barbarians, so Warner's translation was correct.

That is a somewhat narrow legal term. The Greek word is *politeia* [πολιτεία], the regime of Athens, the way of life of Athens as a city, which made Athens what she is, and he speaks now of that in the next chapter, in chapter 37. Yes?

Reader:
"Let me say that our system of government does not copy the institutions of our neighbors."

LS: The system of government is as always the same word, *politeia*.

Reader: Regime?

LS: Ya.

Reader:
"It is more the case of our being a model to others, than of our imitating anyone else. Our constitution—"

Regime?

LS: Ya, the word is not used, it's only understood. Ya.

Reader:
"Our regime is called a democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority but of the whole people. When it is a question of settling private disputes, everyone is equal before the law; when it is a question of putting one person before another in positions of public responsibility, what counts is not membership of a particular class, but the actual ability which the man possesses. No one, as long as he has it in him to be of service to the city, is kept in political obscurity because of poverty." (2.37)

LS: So in other words, you see it's a very strange democracy, if you go back to the original meaning of democracy. In one sense it is democracy as we understand it: equality before the law. A murderer is punished in the same way whether the murderer is rich or poor, noble or base. But if it is a matter of officials, of magistracies, then of course you have to consider the individual you elect and you have to *discriminate* between individuals who deserve to be magistrates and individuals who do not deserve it. That is a nondemocratic principle, because here the difference, especially that between virtue/excellence and nonexcellence is to be considered, whereas it is not considered in penal law. I mean, we take this today for granted, but for the Greeks, as you can see with special clarity from Aristotle's *Politics*, the democratic principle would require that even the magistrates, the highest magistrates, including the generals of course, would be elected by *lot*, because that is the only way in which a wholly undistinguished individual could become a general, has the same chance of being elected as a man who has distinguished himself in earlier campaigns.[xxiv] Now in practice there was of course always this exception for both as regards the generalship and the public treasury, no election by lot, because if you would make a poor man a treasurer, that would be too risky. I mean, you have to use a bit of common sense. You know? But in other cases, if you were strict—logical, as they say today—[2]you would distribute offices

[xxiv] See, e.g., Aristotle, *Politics* 1294b7-10.

only according to lot and not according to, as the Greeks called it, raising the hands, raising the hands meaning voting for or against, so you know for whom you vote. Then you consider the qualities of the candidate, and that is an aristocratic principle, not a democratic principle. That one must keep in mind. Thucydides doesn't explain it, but everyone understood it at the time. The main point which he makes which is here is this: Athens is not an unqualified democracy. That he makes quite clear. If am still around by that time and we come to the speech of Athenagoras in the sixth book of Thucydides, who is the leader of the democratic party in Syracuse[xxv]—he is the representative of democracy pure and simple, not Pericles. This is clear already on the basis of this passage. Yes?

Reader:
"And, just as our political life is free and open, so is our day-to-day life in our relations with each other. We do not get into a state with our next-door neighbor if he enjoys himself in his own way, nor do we give him the kind of black looks which, though they do no real harm, still do hurt people's feelings."

LS: . . . some other thing which isn't quite dignified. Easygoing! That is essential. The Athenian freedom includes easy-goingness. It is not necessary; it is imaginable that you have a democracy which is not easygoing, a puritan democracy. Athens was not a puritan democracy, that is clear. Yes?

Reader:
"We are free and tolerant in our private lives; but in public affairs we keep to the law. This is because it commands our deep respect.

'We give our obedience to those whom we put in positions of authority, and we obey the laws themselves, especially those which are for the protection of the oppressed, and those unwritten laws which it is an acknowledged shame to break." (2.37)

LS: Ya, so this is one special group of laws, which he emphasizes, which have not been voted by popular assembly: the *un*written laws, and particularly disgraceful things in the interest of the weak and feeble. Yes. So they are easygoing, but no anarchy. Yes?

Reader:
"And here is another point. When our work is over, we are in a position to enjoy all kinds of recreation for our spirits. There are various kinds of contests and sacrifices regularly throughout the year; in our own homes we find a beauty and a good taste which delight us every day and which drive away our cares. Then the greatness of our city brings it about that all the good things from all over the world flow in to us, so that to us it seems just as natural to enjoy foreign goods as our own local products." (2.38)

LS: Ya. That is only for the enlarged *easy*-goingness, and of course it doesn't go without some exaggerations. They kept getting things, the goods from the whole earth, and they knew, Pericles knew more of the earth than to believe that the products of all countries come to Athens. But on such an occasion truthfulness, literal truthfulness, is not to be expected from a sensible man, and

[xxv] Thucydides 6.36-40.

a highly sensible man. Therefore we must be satisfied with that. Yes? And then he speaks again of war. Yes?

Reader:
"Then there is a great difference between us and our opponents, in our attitude towards military security. Here are some examples: Our city is open to the world, and we have no periodical deportations in order to prevent people observing or finding out secrets which might be of military advantage to the enemy. This is because we rely, not on secret weapons, but on our own real courage and loyalty. There is a difference, too, in our educational systems. The Spartans, from their earliest boyhood, are submitted to the most laborious training in courage; we pass our lives without all these restrictions, and yet are just as ready to face the same dangers as they are. Here is a proof of this: When the Spartans invade our land, they do not come by themselves, but bring all their allies with them; whereas we, when we launch an attack abroad, do the job by ourselves, and, though fighting on foreign soil, do not often fail to defeat opponents who are fighting for their own hearths and homes. As a matter of fact none of our enemies has ever yet been confronted with our total strength, because we have to divide our attention between our navy and the many missions on which our troops are sent on land. Yet, if our enemies engage a detachment of our forces and defeat it, they give themselves credit for having thrown back our entire army; or, if they lose, they claim that they were beaten by us in full strength. (2.39)

LS: So Pericles doesn't go so far as to say that the Athenians are always victorious. They *are* sometimes defeated, but that doesn't mean very much. Yes. And now there comes his most quoted sentence, and I think we will end at this point, at the beginning of chapter 40. "We love the beautiful"—it's very hard to translate, because the terms are all ambiguous and shows him with a certain preciosity. "We love the beautiful with . . . in other words, no barbarous pomp, "and we love wisdom without softness," so [not] like people who sit in the shade and have discussions and neglect their bodies. You find in Plato's dialogue *Gorgias* an example of the latter point, when Callicles speaks of the undesirable character of life, people who philosophize, which means "love wisdom," not merely when they are very young and when it is nice, but when they are grown up and when they should do other things, too. And that, he says, is so funny, as if some youthful speech defect, like lisping, is still continued by a grownup man, which is ridiculous.[xxvi] And that is what Socrates stands for. And so Pericles is the same opponent as Callicles is. There is a fundamental difference between—not between Thucydides and Plato, God forbid, but between Pericles and Plato.

Ya. Now we can unfortunately not finish that. We will continue the praise of Athens more, and quite a few wonderful sentences occur, and it ends with an admonition to the bereaved, especially the widows who have to behave properly, as there is no women's liberation. That woman is best who is least mentioned in male society. And the children, the orphans, the sons of those fallen, they will be educated at public expense. That is the duty of the city. That is the practical argument to the practical point to which the speech leads up. We'll leave it at this point. And [3]as you may know, or if you don't know you will see it very soon, what follows immediately after the funeral speech is the plague. This great, grandest oration, grandest speech, the most resplendent speech, followed by the biggest beating which could be inflicted on human

[xxvi] Plato *Gorgias* 484c-486d.

beings, showing the limitations of Athens and not only of Athens. That we will discuss next time.

Session 5: no date
Book 2, chapters 39-65

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —and he makes it clear enough that he was a Greek. His first task is therefore to show, that is to say to prove, that that war is in fact the greatest war. He showed this by showing the weakness of the ancients, who were incapable of waging a war on such a large scale as the Peloponnesian War was waged. How these two things go together, that the Peloponnesian War is the greatest war and Thucydides is an observer and describer of that war, and on the other hand, that he was a participant in the war, is not easy to say. There is a link, surely, between the two things, but what is that link? We today would not hesitate to speak of Greek culture, of which such things as the Peloponnesian War on the one hand and Thucydides's *History* on the other are outstanding documents, but culture in this sense is not a notion of the Greeks. It is more cautious to speak of—

Reader: Can I interrupt? The microphone doesn't seem to be—

LS: Oh, I'm sorry. In order to avoid such difficult notions as culture, it is perhaps better to speak of something called with a rather dubious word, of Greekness. But since this is defined in Thucydides's work, it is relatively harmless to use, and then it would mean, Greekness would mean love of the beautiful and love of learning combined. And we can leave it at that for the time being.

Now what Thucydides shows in the first part of his *History*, when he describes how Greece became powerful and hence able to wage this terrific war, he describes at the same time the emergence of Greekness. And there was a time when there were no human beings who could be called Greeks, which doesn't mean that there were ever any times in which there were no human beings, but just no Greeks. I believe we must keep this in mind.

Now when Thucydides concludes the introduction, that is in book 1, chapter 22, he repeats that account of the ancient things, what is called the Archaeology. And this time he compares the Peloponnesian War only with the Trojan War, not with all earlier great events. And parallel to that, Thucydides's own work, the *History*, is parallel to Homer's poems, whatever that may mean. Thucydides as it were engages in a contest with Homer, and I believe we must never forget that. It is no accident that in the immediately preceding chapter, in chapter 22, Thucydides speaks of his way of proceeding and contrasts it with the way of proceeding of other people, say, of poets, and not only of poets. Now in that repetition of the Archaeology, chapter 23, Thucydides proves the superiority of the Peloponnesian to the Trojan War with special regard to the demonic origin of the suffering of the Greeks during that period: earthquakes and similar things. The demonic, we would say, is natural, but we must be careful here. Surely, without the demonic, the human is altogether impossible. But demonic is somehow "quote religiously unquote" understood. It is, at any rate, not simply identical with what we understand by the natural. How this has to be, how this distinction between the natural and the demonic has to be understood is a long question. There is one passage to which we might turn now first, in book 2, chapter 64, paragraph 2.

Reader:
"But it is right to endure with resignation what the gods send."

Is that too—?

LS: Ya, that's a bit free.

Reader: All right.

LS: "One ought to bear the demonic things necessarily as something imposed, but that which comes from the enemies one ought to bear bravely, but there can be no bravery towards the demonic because of its superhuman character, but it must be born."

Reader: Should I continue?

LS: No, that's all right for our present purpose. The distinction between the human things, the things which human beings do to one another or which they produce, and the demonic things have this in common, that they are subject to both rest and motion. But rest and motion are fundamentally distinguished from one another. One can say that the most fundamental distinction is that of rest and motion. We cannot go behind that distinction, at least not according to what Thucydides explicitly says. But there is something to add immediately. We have here motion and rest, and war, both domestic and foreign, is of course motion. Peace is rest. Rest is somehow higher in rank than motion and unrest, but it is not possible without unrest. And the sign of that, and not a negligible sign of that is that in fact in two of his three speeches, Pericles presents himself as a man who confronts unrest and masters it, and this is a sign of his greatness as a statesman, that he can confront it and master it. There is a majority of men who can't face it, and still less master it.

Now the Peloponnesian War was primarily a war between Athens and Sparta. These two cities are distinguished from one another not only by their political and military arrangements, but also by their state of mind, their spirit. Therefore there are to be—and it must be understood not merely in terms of the cleverness and stupidity of their policies, one must also consider their form, their character, their *eidos* [εἶδος]. Thucydides makes it clear that Athens is superior to Sparta. We have some traces of it already, especially with the funeral speech, but we will find more of them. But Athenian "quote culture unquote" is not so much spoken about—that is done only in the funeral speech of Pericles—as presented: Pericles is making the funeral speech. This is Thucydides's presentation of Athenian culture, not an essay of Thucydides on Athenian culture.

I have spoken of two fundamental distinctions, unrest and rest, and the demonic and the humans, because they are truly universal. There is a third fundamental distinction, which appears only as regards the human things, and that is the distinction between the just and the unjust. The gods are not just or unjust in any serious sense of the word. And this is a very great theme, justice. The first two words of the first two speeches occurring in Thucydides are the words "just" and "necessary," or "compulsory." The first speech, a speech by the people called Corcyraeans, [the word] is "just," and the first word of the speech, the next speech, the speech of the Corinthians is

"necessary." What does that mean, that distinction, and how is it connected to the other distinctions to which I have referred? In a way, that is *the* question of the understanding of Thucydides. I shall say only the most necessary thing at this point. Now the most important example of justice is the performance of covenants. Nonperformance may be excused by compulsion, as Germany claimed that her breach of Belgian neutrality in 1914 was caused by necessity. Necessity does not recognize the law, and therefore Germany was entitled to violate that neutrality. But, so it is possible prior to investigation that the breach of covenant is excusable, but that it is excusable means of course that it is in need of excuse and is not in itself something just. In the Athenian speech in Corinth in the first book, they speak of three motives of political action, and they call them fear, honor, profit. Now fear and compulsion, that is the same fundamentally, but obviously honor and still more profit do not have that compulsory and therefore that excusable character which compulsion and fear have. What the precise relation between these three things is, and whether profit and honor can ever truly excuse breach of covenant, that is a question to which we do not have a ready answer.

So this much to remind you of the things we have discussed, and this is of course this is a very poor reminder, from which I have omitted most of the things we have discussed. Now in our reading of Thucydides, we came to the funeral speech in the second part of the book, and we will turn to that immediately. But is there any point I raised now or I alluded to which you would like to take up? You see, it is obvious from my brief report that Thucydides cannot be as easily subsumed under good guys or bad guys as one can try in the case of Machiavelli. He sees the complexity of human affairs more clearly and more vividly than Machiavelli, but it is of course also true even from this superficial survey that he was not a bad guy. Yes? I mean, I use this distinction between good guys and bad guys because it plays a great role in present-day college discussions, as I happen to know. Ya, Mr. Berns?

Mr. Berns: I was wondering why for instance you use the word "demonic" and "human" rather than "divine" and "human."

LS: Well, the two words are in a sense synonymous, demonic and divine, in classical Greek. And one can say [that] demonic is perhaps a somewhat broader term, because you may remember the passage on the demonic from Plato's *Symposium*, you know, where the demonic is presented as a link between the divine and the human, and therefore it is not simply divine and yet it has very much to do with the divine.[i] Thucydides uses the word "god" or "divine" from time to time, although more in the mouth of some of his characters than in his own speech.

Mr. Berns: Yeah, well, it's just that one would think that sometimes speaks of human beings as demonic.

LS: Ya.

Mr. Berns: So I guess, I feel sometimes . . . speaks of them as divine.

LS: Well, I'm sure that there is a long prehistory in late antiquity, but the way in which we use it now, or many people use it now, is rather of Goethean than of Greek origin.

[i] Plato, *Symposium* 201e-203d.

Mr. Berns: Of which . . .

LS: Of Goethe's, Goethe.

Mr. Berns: Oh, Goethe.

LS: Ya. Yes. Now of course the distinction between good and evil demons entered and modified the distinction; there was no such distinction among the Greeks, and whereas the Christian doctrine made the demons evil demons. And Goethe, who had broken with much of Christianity, broke with that too, but he reintroduced the concept of the demonic as something superhuman and *mysterious*—superhuman mysterious. For example, when he speaks of the prince, the then-prince August Wilhelm, I think was his name, of Weimar,[ii] he calls him demonic. The capacity to divine—you know, to understand quickly, and which goes much beyond what is normally to given human beings and so on. I believe that Goethe has very much to do with the present-day sense of demonic, and I don't know Carlyle in any way of which I could boast, but I wouldn't be surprised if Carlyle had not taken over that Goethean usage and made use of it, but there must be some among you who know Carlyle. Mr. Barrion Smith, do you know Carlyle's usage regarding the demonic?

Mr. Smith: No.

LS: Yes?

Student: Is it wrong to think of Thucydides as a maker of events insofar as his arrangement constitutes the consequence . . .

LS: Yes, in this sense, yes. This is what people mean when they say he is a historian who is at the same time an artist. You know? The dramatic presentation, say, the Melian dialogue, followed by the Sicilian disaster, that somehow in a way that happened in this way, but the way in which Thucydides presents it is Thucydides's own doing. And also here, what we read in the second book, the funeral speech followed by the plague, there is some of Thucydides's doing there. There are other things where one is tempted to think that these are Thucydidean inventions rather than matter of fact. Some characters where one cannot [know, characters] who are wholly unknown outside of Thucydides but play a great role in Thucydides, whether they are not inventions. Question?

Student: And the purpose of these inventions?

LS: Well, for example, *the* most decent and intelligent Athenian, I mean both combined, both the most decent and the most intelligent, has the name Diodotus. He is the enemy of Cleon in a decisive situation, when the question is up whether [1]Mytilene should be destroyed or not. And in a way which is very far from being straightforward, but very clever, he saves Mytilene. Of this Diodotus nothing is known. The name is "Zeus-given," literally translated. Nothing is known of

[ii] Strauss must mean August (or Augustus) Wilhelm of Prussia (1722-1758), younger brother of Frederick the Great and father of the childless Frederick's eventual successor, Friedrich Wilhelm IV.

him. He could be an invention of Thucydides. And then there is another case which is perhaps more striking. There is a deliberation on the island of Sicily, when the going is not so good for Athens. And he delivers a speech by which he tries to save the situation. His name is Euphemus, which is the same as euphemistic. You know? He makes a euphemistic speech. Nothing is known of that man. And there are probably other cases. In many cases we can't know because not all—he mentions quite a few generals and admirals of whom nothing is known except what he says. So that's hard to say. I mean, he surely was not a scientific historian in the twentieth or nineteenth century sense of the term. He was much more interested, if he could, to make his readers wise and informed, although he also wanted to inform them to the extent to which it is necessary to be informed in order to be wise, but it is more important to be wise than to be informed. Yes?

Student: When you mentioned rest and motion, I was wondering if the characters who characterize Athens as having more of a motion and Sparta as having more of rest in it, and if this were a valid characterization. You spoke of Athens as being presented as superior, and you also spoke of rest as being of a higher level than motion.

LS: No, the point which you make is very good. Surely Athens is a place of *un*rest, of innovation, of progress, and all the things belong together. Sparta is a very old-fashioned, immovable city. That is doubtless true. And from this point of view Athens would be superior to Sparta. But then when we put together all the relevant things, we arrive at the conclusion that precisely in Athens the highest is the superiority of rest, represented in a way by Pericles, the man who faces and controls unrest but is himself unmoved. Now to what extent this is irony on the part of Thucydides, that's a long question which we in our present state of knowledge are in no position to answer, but you can say that Thucydides himself, in his overall view of everything—say, motion and rest, or justice and compulsion and all the other fundamental distinctions—he deals with something which cannot be changed, which is in this sense in complete rest, and so the highest theme is rest and not unrest. But many more things have to be considered, but the question is absolutely necessary to raise. Yes?

Dr. Kass: May I pursue this?

LS: Ya, sure.

Dr. Kass: In a way your first suggestion of an answer as in what sense Athens, the city of innovation, can be superior is that it produces men who are somehow above unrest, such as Pericles. But in a way the last point you mentioned suggests that maybe Athens' superiority . . . Thucydides and not Pericles.

LS: Ya. Today there exists a word which I believe you have heard—I'm *sorry* that you have heard it, but you have heard it, and that they call "dialectics." Did you ever hear that? So in other words, that there is a certain an inner necessity that unrest is the condition without which the highest form of rest is absolutely impossible. Ya? And therefore Thucydides is superior to Pericles. Something of this kind, I believe, was there.

Student: But the Spartans are conservative but they don't have a point on which to rest . . . at least the Athenians ultimately might have responded . . .

LS: What precisely is that point you mean?

Same Student: I mean since they have dialectics . . . they might seek a point of rest or reach a point of rest.

LS: Even on the lower level, they are much more speakers than the Spartans.

Same Student: Yeah. The Spartans simply conserve what they have and—

LS: Ya, but this is—again dialectics comes in, because why are the Spartans so nice, so conservative, so peaceful? And the answer comes out much later, in book 7 or thereabouts,[iii] that the Spartans had a very strong slave population, the Messenians, whom they had got not because of their beautiful eyes but because they had broken contracts with their fellow Lacedaemonians called the Messenians,[iv] and therefore they had to be peaceful. You see? So their niceness was due to compulsion, and not to justice.

Student: But the Spartans produced Brasidas, who was a—

LS: Yes!

Same Student: a just man.

LS: Brasidas is a wonderful man.

Same Student: And a fine speaker.

LS: But he is the only nice Spartan in Thucydides.

Student: Archidamus.

LS: Pardon?

Student: Archidamus.

LS: Ya, that is true, but Archidamus owes his position to inheritance. He was a hereditary king, that is true. He was a gentleman, there's no doubt. But Brasidas was just a commoner, a first-rate

[iii] The passage in question is to be found at 4.80.

[iv] It is not clear why Strauss would describe the Messenians as fellow Lacedaemonians of the Spartans. Neither party so understood themselves, nor do historians whether ancient or modern regard them as belonging to the same people. The Spartans had invaded Messenia and subjected the Messenians centuries before: reduced to helots, the Messenians remained distinct from the Spartans or Lacedaemonians. Similarly, his reference to the Spartans having broken contracts with the Messenians remains obscure.

military commander and diplomat, and helped Sparta very much, but he was completely unable to—he assured people who didn't trust the Spartans that they could depend on the Spartan authority because they had sworn the most holy oath that they would do these things they promised. Well, at the first occasion they broke them, to say nothing of the fact of what they did to Plataea. Plataea was a Boeotian city which behaved very decently during the Persian War, siding with the Greeks against the barbarians. And what happened? Thebes, the traitorous city which betrayed the city to Persia,[v] was a deadly enemy of Plataea. And they began the Peloponnesian War by attacking Plataea in peacetime. And the situation was slightly ambiguous. At any rate, the Thebans compelled the Spartans to destroy Plataea, and the Spartans were confronted with the choice between justice and expediency, or between justice and pleasure, as others call it. And then they chose pleasure! It was much more convenient to sacrifice these lousy Plataeans, who didn't have much power, than to stick up for the right.

Student: We still haven't explained how—I can understand how a man like Cleon, or a man like Alcibiades could arise out of Athens, but how could a man like Brasidas arise out of Sparta?

LS: Ya, because the Spartans, they're engaged in a war which led to reactions similar to those of the Vietnamese War in this country now. And then there was a single man, a single general, who brought successes to Sparta, and that was Brasidas. And that alone gave him a high prestige. It is very interesting that at least on one occasion Thucydides calls the soldiers of Brasidas not the Spartans but the Brasideans. That is a special class of men, just like the Greeks fighting under Xenophon, you know, a bit later were a special class of Greek soldiers. Brasidas was an admirable man, there's no doubt about that, but unique. And Thucydides says of him [that] he was good at speaking, considering that he was a Spartan, which means—I don't have to explain that.

So now let us then turn to the funeral speech, of which we read already a part last time. We came, I think, up to chapter 37 inclusively. I'll remind you only of a very few points. The funeral speech was delivered by Pericles in obedience to the ancestral law, and yet he begins the speech with a critique of that very ancestral law. That is the progressive liberal politician, if I may use nineteenth, twentieth century expressions. And then he describes the progress of Athens from the olden times 'til now, and that is substantially what Thucydides himself had done in his Archaeology, in his description of the ancient times. Pericles's point of view, if he looks back at the whole of what happened in Greece in former times, and Thucydides's point of view are here undistinguishable, which doesn't mean that there are not points where they are distinguishable.

And then, giving an analysis of Athens' greatness, he says the chief ground was Athens' political order, *politeia*, and he describes this as democracy in *one* respect, meaning every citizen could be elected to any office. There was no class distinction in this way. But in another respect, of course, there was another principle—[vi]

Reader:

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[v] There is some confusion in Strauss's expression here: at the time of the Persian Wars, Thebes had betrayed the Hellenic cause by siding with the Persians.

[vi] There is a break in the tape at this point. The recording resumes during the reading. The mission portion of the passage has been supplied from the translation.

"Then there is a great difference between us and our opponents, in our attitude towards military security. Here are some examples: Our city is open to the world, and we have no periodical deportations in order to prevent people observing or finding out secrets which might be of military advantage to the enemy."

LS: This is an allusion to the Spartan habit of expelling foreigners from time to time, that they might not find out secrets which would harm Sparta.

Reader:

"This is because we rely, not on secret weapons, but on our own real courage and loyalty. There is a difference, too, in our educational systems. The Spartans, from their earliest boyhood, are submitted to the most laborious training in courage; we pass our lives without all these restrictions, and yet are just as ready to face the same dangers as they are. Here is a proof of this: When the Spartans invade our land, they do not come by themselves, but bring all their allies with them; whereas we, when we launch an attack abroad, do the job by ourselves, and, though fighting on foreign soil, do not often fail to defeat opponents who are fighting for their own hearths and homes. As a matter of fact none of our enemies has ever yet been confronted with our total strength, because we have to divide our attention between our navy and the many missions on which our troops are sent on land. Yet, if our enemies engage a detachment of our forces and defeat it, they give themselves credit for having thrown back our entire army; or, if they lose, they claim that they were beaten by us in full strength. There are certain advantages, I think, in our way of meeting danger voluntarily with an easy mind, instead of with a laborious training, with natural rather than with state-induced courage. We do not have to spend our time practicing to meet sufferings which are still in the future; and when they are actually upon us we show ourselves just as brave as those others who are always in strict training. This is one point in which, I think, our city deserves to be admired. There are also others:

"Our love of what is beautiful does not lead to extravagance; our love of the things of the mind does not make us soft. We regard wealth as something to be properly used, rather than as something to boast about. As for poverty, no one need be ashamed to admit it: the real shame is in not taking practical measures to escape from it. Here each individual is interested not only in his own affairs but in the affairs of the city[vii] as well: even those who are mostly occupied with their own business are extremely well-informed on general politics—this is a peculiarity of ours: we do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say that he has no business here at all. We Athenians, in our own persons, take our decisions on policy or submit them to proper discussions: for we do not think that there is an incompatibility between words and deeds; the worst thing is to rush into action before the consequences have been properly debated. And this is another point where we differ from other people. We are capable at the same time of taking risks and of estimating them beforehand. Others are brave out of ignorance; and, when they stop to think, they begin to fear. But the man who can most truly be accounted brave is he who best knows the meaning of what is sweet in life and of what is terrible, and then goes out undeterred to meet what is to come.

[vii] Warner has "state"

"Again, in questions of general good feeling there is a great contrast between us and most other people. We make friends by doing good to others, not by receiving good from them. This makes our friendship all the more reliable, since we want to keep alive the gratitude of those who are in our debt by showing continued goodwill to them: whereas the feelings of one who owes us something lack the same enthusiasm, since he knows that, when he repays our kindness, it will be more like paying back a debt than giving something spontaneously. We are unique in this. When we do kindnesses to others, we do not do them out any calculations of profit or loss: we do them without afterthought, relying on our free liberality." (2.39-40)

LS: Ya. Well, why are they so much hated then, if they are such generous rulers? That is the question, you know? Let us read in chapter 43, the first paragraph.

Reader:

"So and such they were, these men—worthy of their city. We who remain behind may hope to be spared their fate, but must resolve to keep the same daring spirit against the foe. It is not simply a question of estimating the advantages in theory. I could tell you a long story (and you know it as well as I do) about what is to be gained by beating the enemy back. What I would prefer is that you should fix your eyes every day on the greatness of Athens as she really is, and should fall in love with her." (2.43)

LS: Ya, that's the word: "falling in [love], becoming lovers of Athens." Now the woman whom they are to love is the city of Athens, and that is Athenian patriotism. Sparta was not a proper subject of love; Athens was, could be. At least that is what Pericles hopes. And the final point I want to draw your attention to is at the end of this Cchapter 43, the last paragraph.

Reader:
"Make up your minds that happiness depends on being free." Is that about the place?

"Make up your minds that happiness depends on being free, and freedom depends on being courageous. Let there be no relaxation in face of the perils of the war. The people who have most excuse for despising death are not the wretched and unfortunate, who have no hope of doing well for themselves, but those who run the risk of a complete reversal in their lives, and who would feel the difference most intensely, if things went wrong for them. Any intelligent man would find a humiliation caused by his own slackness more painful to bear than death, when death comes to him unperceived, in battle, and in the confidence of his patriotism." (2.43)

LS: Ya, that is a very . . . but the point which I wanted to stress is this. The word which is used at the end of this chapter is "unperceived death," anai*sthêtos thanatos* [ἀναίσθητος θάνατος]. That's the only time in which the word "death" occurs in the funeral speech. [Otherwise] neither "death" nor "dying" nor "corpse" ever occurs. And this is a peculiar, what one could call with a very nasty word, or perhaps a very helpful word, the Fourth of July character of the funeral speech. You know? The terrors are barely alluded to, and a great writer, not inferior to Thucydides, has imitated this particular . . . and that is Plato, in his dialogue *Menexenus*, which is a funeral speech delivered by Aspasia, the famous girlfriend of Pericles. And she was not even an Athenian citizen, of course, and this is a grotesque piece of fiction that she should give the

funeral speech,[viii] and she is still more reserved regarding the terrors of wars than Thucydides's Pericles.

So now this is all we can afford to read of the funeral speech, and it is a grand piece of rhetoric, perhaps the grandest piece of rhetoric of ancient times. But it must be read as a piece of rhetoric, and we must not fall victims to Thucydides's charms. Now Thucydides corrects this, or provides for this danger himself by the fact that the funeral speech is immediately followed by the description of the plague, where death, dying, and corpses abound, so that any opposite effect achieved by the funeral speech is avoided here. There are a few points surrounding the plague which are worth reading for our purposes in chapter 52, if you will turn to that. Ya, read 52 to the beginning of 53.

Reader:
A factor which made matters much worse than they were already was the removal of people from the country into the city, and this particularly affected the incomers. There were no houses for them, and, living as they did during the hot season in badly ventilated huts, they died like flies. The bodies of the dying were heaped one on top of the other, and half-dead creatures could be seen staggering about in the streets or flocking around the fountains in their desire for water. The temples in which they took up their quarters were full of the dead bodies of people who had died inside them. For the catastrophe was so overwhelming that men, not knowing what would happen next to them, became indifferent to every rule of religion or of law. All the funeral ceremonies which used to be observed were now disorganized, and they buried the dead as best they could. Many people, lacking the necessary means of burial because so many deaths had already occurred in their households, adopted the most shameless methods. They would arrive first at a funeral pyre that had been made by others, put their own dead upon it and set it alight; or, finding another pyre burning, they would throw the corpse that they were carrying on top of the other one and go away.

In other respects also Athens owed to the plague the beginnings of a state of unprecedented lawlessness. Seeing how quick and abrupt were the changes of fortune which came to the rich who suddenly died and to those who had previously been penniless but now inherited their wealth, people now began openly to venture on acts of self-indulgence which before then they used to keep dark. Thus they resolved to spend their money quickly and to spend it on pleasure, since money and life alike seemed equally ephemeral. As for what is called honour, no one showed himself willing to abide by its laws, so doubtful was it whether one would survive to enjoy the name for it. It was generally agreed that what was both honourable and valuable was the pleasure of the moment and everything that might conceivably contribute to that pleasure. (2.52-53)

LS: Then we come later on to the description of the sedition, the rising in Corcyra, civil war and the complete demoralization. That is here anticipated. But here it is of demonic origin, sent by

[viii] Socrates's claim in the *Menexenus* is not that Aspasia had delivered such a speech but that she had composed one and declaimed it privately, which Socrates proceeds to recite to Menexenus. Socrates also suggests, however, that Aspasia had composed the funeral oration that Pericles himself had delivered (*Menexenus* 235e-236b).

Apollo, as the plague in the Iliad, whereas in Corcyra it was of human origin and the effect, the moral effect was the same. Yes?

Reader:
No fear of god or law of man had a restraining influence. As for the gods, it seemed to be the same thing whether one worshipped them or not, when one saw the good and the bad dying indiscriminately. As for offences against human law, no one expected to live long enough to be brought to trial and punished: instead everyone felt that already a far heavier sentence had been passed on him and was hanging over him, and that before the time for its execution arrived it was only natural to get some pleasure out of life. (2.53)

Should I go on?

LS: No, that will do. No, this is only as a curiosity, what Gomme says about Thucydides's description of the plague: "That part of Thucydides' story of the great pestilence, which is a detailed account of the symptoms, is essentially a digression in the History, for they have little to do with politics or war. It is there primarily because he was interested scientifically in the disease, being the recorder of a great disaster which had much to do with politics and the war. It is in this way parallel to other digressions, the character and last years of Themistocles and Pausanias, and so on."[ix]

Ya? He knows better than Thucydides what was good for Thucydides, and he's one of the best men, the best historians. Gomme, an Englishman. He didn't live to complete it. Yes.

Now a little bit later, in 59 following to 64, there is the last speech, the third speech of Pericles, because there was naturally a certain dissatisfaction with Pericles after the plague and he had to set Athenians aright, which he did in his last speech. But the funeral speech, the most famous, is the central speech of the three Periclean speeches, if we count only the direct speeches and not the other speech about which Thucydides only reports, where he speaks of the value of the goddess, of the Pallas Athena. Yes?

Student: Why did he do that, by the way? Wouldn't it have been easy for him to write the speeches . . . the other three . . .

LS: No, well, there is a certain virtue in the central position. That is a kind of—you can say a kind of convention that you bring the most important into the center, and the funeral speech, everyone would I believe admit that, is the most important Periclean speech. Now there is still the question: Since there are many points of view from which a thing can be called important, *why* is that most important? But from a more superficial point of view, everyone knows of the funeral speech, I mean everyone who has ever had any dealings with Greek literature. Even those people who know no more of Aristotle than that Aristotle defended slavery know that Thucydides wrote the funeral speech, the most famous one. And it is really a piece of splendor which has no parallel in Thucydides himself, let alone elsewhere. Yes?

Student [Reader]: What is it that enables you to say that the plague was sent from Apollo?

[ix] Gomme, *Historical Commentary* 2, 161.

LS: Well, who should have sent it? [Laughter]

Same Student: No, he talks about it coming from Egypt to begin with, and then it first hit the population of the Piraeus.

LS: But there is also a reference to Apollo somewhere, although I couldn't tell you now offhand where, but there is a reference in there.[x]

Same Student: Well, the reason I asked, that section you just had us read about, as for the gods it seemed to be the same thing whether one worshiped them or not, is that an indication of the way Thucydides himself sees the gods, that their—

LS: Ya, that is a very, very complicated question, and the most explicit statement about the gods is the Melian dialogue. And there not Thucydides, of course, but some Athenian ambassadors speak about it, and they don't say such terrible things about the gods. The gods behave more or less like human beings. You know? There is no blame of them. But if you read Thucydides's work as a whole, I believe you will end with the conclusion that Thucydides did not believe in divine providence in the way in which we have been brought up to believe and in which also the majority of the Greeks were brought up to believe. There is the famous figure of Nicias, one of the nicest men in the whole work and who was really a pious man, and his end was as miserable as that of any crook could be, and of course no prospect of something of an afterlife in which things would be equalized.

Same Student: But to say there is no divine providence is just almost the same as saying it doesn't matter, it's not important to give any attention to the gods one way or the other.

LS: Ya, except that there is something like what is ordinarily translated as virtue, meaning it does make a difference whether you are a decent human being or not, and Nicias was very much concerned with that. Nicias was not a virtuous man of the highest order—I mean, Thucydides doesn't say so. He understood virtue in the terms in which the *nomos* [νόμος] understood it, but was very strict in this respect. You know? A pious man, and even perhaps in a somewhat exaggerated way, that is all what we get from Thucydides out of it, but he is one of the men most highly praised by Thucydides.

Same Student: But being decent then is simply for the ends of the city. Well, it's hard to separate the city and gods, but—

LS: No, for oneself also—don't forget that. A man whom I will not praise as a very pious man, but he was being read in this college, so I can quote him: Hegel used to say that a mother doesn't wish to be rewarded for saving the life of her child. Something of this seems to have been the thought of the virtuous pagans. There are certain things which are intrinsically decent and you do them, and if you don't do them you are a rather lousy fellow. That's it. I think that is, that I believe was also Thucydides's view. Thucydides is unusually reserved compared with Herodotus, for example, or Xenophon, but his reserve can hardly be construed to mean that he

[x] Thucydides 2.54.4-5.

had not made up his mind. Of the Greek dramatists . . . classical scholars said, he was not—how did they put it—or he believed in providence, all this kind of thing, naturally he was not a fundamentalist from the Bible belt, which makes sense. But I would say that Thucydides also was not a fundamentalist from the Bible belt, only whereas the Greek tragedians at least apparently seemed to accept the popular notion of the gods, Thucydides does not seem to accept them. He does not reject them explicitly, but if one can make a distinction, he was not a fundamentalist, but there is something else called an indifferentist, meaning a man who doesn't care either way. Ya, Thucydides was not an indifferentist, he had given some thought. What the result of this thought was, that's not easy to say. It needs some study.

Ya, and here after the first, that last Periclean speech, there comes Thucydides's final appreciation of Pericles and his policy, and this we should read. But first, tell me the time, because I cannot trust my watch.

Reader: 10:06.

LS: I see. Then we might be able to read that. Chapter 65, paragraph 9. When he says: Whenever he observed them doing something out of hubris, with the view—in inopportune time, then he talked them down to fear. Ya?

Reader: Yes, I think I see that. This is about three-quarters of the way.

LS: Yes.

Reader:
The reason for this was that Pericles, because of his position, his intelligence, and his known integrity, could respect the liberty of the people and at the same time hold them in check. It was he who led them, rather than they who led him, and, since he never sought power from any wrong motive, he was under no necessity of flattering them: in fact he was so highly respected that he was able to speak angrily to them and to contradict them. Certainly when he saw that they were going too far in a mood of over-confidence, he would bring back to them a sense of their dangers—

LS: Ya, but I want to say only this: there is not a single example of such a Periclean speech, of a speech in which Pericles quieted the Athenian populace; whereas the opposite, that he encouraged them, there are at least three examples. This, I think, we should keep in mind. And then a little bit later, a few lines later, there comes the final appreciation. Yes?

Reader:
So, in what was nominally a democracy, power was really in the hands of the first citizen. But his successors, who were more on a level with each other and each of whom aimed at occupying the first place, adopted methods of demagogy which resulted in their losing control over the actual conduct of affairs. Such a policy, in a great city with an empire to govern, naturally led to a number of mistakes, amongst which was the Sicilian expedition, though in this case the mistake was not so much an error of judgement with regard to the opposition to be expected as a failure on the part of those who were at home to give proper support to their forces overseas.

Because they were so busy with their own personal intrigues for securing the leadership of the people, they allowed this expedition to lose its impetus, and by quarrelling among themselves began to bring confusion into the policy of the state. (2.65)

LS: So that's very important, Pericles's overall policy: additional, aggressive war was by no means necessarily sound. The Athenians could have risked that, but owing to the defects of the successors, to the inferiority of his successors, it led to failure. And that is of course a question which the reader must figure out for himself: What were these mistakes? The war could have been won. The Sicilian expedition could have been won, but it was lost. Why was it lost? Thucydides doesn't tell us. We have to figure out why. Yes? Well, I will say this much . . . There are various examples, which one would have to discuss—I . . . myself only the most important. One could—it was risky, because of the Athenian *demos*, to propose a military policy which might very well have been successful but which for one reason or the other might have failed, and then this was a capital crime for the proposer of that policy. Now there was, for example, a wonderful man who will come up later on, and as far as we know a relative of Thucydides,[xi] called Demosthenes, who made certain military operations in central Greece and was defeated. He simply refused to go home because he knew the Athenians would want his blood, and he did not come home before he had won the victory and then he was welcome again. [LS raps on the table throughout this point] That was one case.

The one case was Alcibiades. Nicias, that sensible and perfectly satisfied man, saturated man, didn't want the Sicilian expedition. Alcibiades, the younger and very ambitious man, wanted it. And now something happened: while the preparations for the expedition were going on, certain crimes were committed. The statues of Hermes were mutilated and similar things, and everyone said that was Alcibiades and his gang who were responsible for that. And so Alcibiades, who had been made a general before, together with Nicias, couldn't become the general, so he fled out of reasonable fear because he knew the Athenians wouldn't listen to him. And then he fled to Sparta because he was a practical man—it was the safest place for him to go—and he revealed to Spartans the whole Athenian political and military policy, and therefore that was the end of the Sicilian expedition. So in other words, if Alcibiades had been in sole control, the Sicilian expedition would have been won. [LS raps on the table for emphasis] But he was not in sole control. The Athenians had a high regard for his military quality, but they didn't trust him somehow, and therefore they said two men should be in control: Alcibiades, this unreliable man, and Nicias, that reliable man. And the consequence was that they lost the war, and because Nicias lacked completely the decisiveness which was necessary to win that war. So it is not merely, one must not merely think of the corruptibility and other undesirable qualities of men like Cleon, which are the cause of Athens' defeat, one must also think of this other aspect: the unreasonableness of the Athenian *demos*. And that is a point which Thucydides doesn't stress, but which he reveals.

Now I think we will—well, where are we now? Only one question, perhaps. The final appreciation of Pericles in chapter 65 antedates the story of his death by about two years. Well, it is an irregularity, without any question, but perhaps defensible because what happened thereafter is no longer interesting, and why should he speak about it? And then the story of Plataea and

[xi] There is no such suggestion in the text of Thucydides.

Thebes comes in, beginning in chapter 70 or thereabouts. Whether we should read it or not I have not yet made up my mind. Well, and then we will turn to book 3 if everything goes well.

Is there any point you would like to raise? Did you ever see a portrait bust of Thucydides? I know nothing of these matters; by some accident I saw one. He looks entirely different than I would have expected: in no way as cynic or Machiavellian or what have you, just an earnest, serious, thoughtful man. It's a pity I haven't brought it with me.

Session 6: no date
Book 3, chapters 52-93

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —utmost important, the . . . with which he deals are not in any way exhausted. Now this is of course a very general description which applies also to other writers of the first order and not only to ancient writers. But there is something different. In classical Greece some people at least held that Homer had in his poems *hyponoiai* [ὑπόνοιαι], as they said, "hidden thoughts," "unexpressed thoughts." So this is nothing peculiar, would not be anything peculiar to Thucydides. But at any rate, in Thucydides that is peculiarly conspicuous. If there were not a remark in Plato or or in another contemporary writer about Homer's hidden thoughts, perhaps very few people, surely very few critics, would have spoken of Homer's hidden thoughts. But in the case of Thucydides it is somehow different. All Thucydides's statements, we can say, are deliberately incomplete, and not in the way in which every historian's statements are incomplete, because people omit details of no interest. Yet Thucydides never continues his incomplete statements, say, about Pericles's political and naval policy, by a statement, "I should have added then when I spoke of it." But the two statements are there in the final chapter on Pericles, and then there are other statements not explicitly connected, and no connection is made explicitly. The addition is made tacitly. I now will use a simple term to indicate, to describe this kind of procedure and will speak of repetition in an emphatic sense, and [I] mean by this that a certain statement is repeated, but with very slight alterations, and only if one considers these slight alterations and takes the original and the bolder statement together does one come within hailing distance of what Thucydides means.

Now right at the beginning of the work, Thucydides speaks of the Peloponnesian War as the greatest motion, disturbance, and the things which happen there as the greatest things done, *megista prachthenta* [μέγιστα πραχθέντα]. But then there follows immediately afterwards, in the twenty-third chapter, a repetition, where it is repeated that the Peloponnesian War is the greatest war, was the greatest war, but because of the greatness of the *sufferings* which human beings inflicted on human beings, and of course also which were inflicted by daemonic beings. Now he had been almost silent on the sufferings in the first segment; in the repetition he speaks almost exclusively of the sufferings. This is a simple example of how one has to put together things deliberately kept separate by the author. One cannot avoid wondering whether there is connection between Thucydides's way of writing and his subject matter. His subject matter is at least partly the daemonic things, whatever they may mean, and of course the city. The relation between these two items is presupposed, but not explained.

Now this answer to explain Thucydides's way of writing by his subject matter is manifestly insufficient. Yet how many great writers have dealt with these subject matters, and yet without any hidden thoughts? The most obvious example which occurs to me is that of Thucydides's alleged continuator, Xenophon, who also deals with daemonic things, and he also deals with the war: as a matter of fact, with the continuation of the war which Thucydides had described. Now let us make an extremely summary comparison of Thucydides and Xenophon. Thucydides—that

is the impression I believe which everyone will get from reading him—is characterized by severity and gravity. There is perhaps no other writer, at least no other nontheological writer who can be compared in this respect to him. Xenophon on the other hand is characterized by light-heartedness, not to say levity, and fear of the demons, *deisidaimonia* [δεισιδαιμονία], so that they are—perhaps by thinking about this simple difference between Thucydides and Xenophon one comes somewhat closer to the understanding of why Thucydides writes in the manner in which he writes.

Now let us continue with our reading of the third book of Thucydides, at which we had to stop last time, and see whether we find there anything which will at least deepen our understanding. I propose that we start in chapter 52. The story is here, we remember what we had [read], this is the question of Mytilene threatened by Athens and Plataea threatened by Thebes and Sparta, and in chapter 52, the fall of Plataea, the . . . of Plataea is described. Will you read this, please?

Reader:
This summer, at about the same time as the above events, the Plataeans, whose provisions had run out and who were no longer able to support the siege, came to terms with the Peloponnesians. The events were as follows. The Peloponnesians had made an attack on the wall and found that the Plataeans were not able to put up any resistance. The Spartan commander, realizing their weakness, had no wish to take the place by storm, because of his instructions from Sparta which had been given with a view to any future peace treaty with Athens under the terms of which each side would have to give back the places that they had conquered in the war: thus Plataea, on the assumption that it had come over voluntarily, would not have to be given back. He sent a herald to them to ask whether they would voluntarily give up their city to the Spartans and submit themselves to the judgement of Sparta, on the understanding that the guilty would be punished, but no one without a fair trial. (3.52)

LS: In other words, they believe that there was not such an inveterate hatred between the Plataeans and Spartans; the Spartans would be more acceptable in this function than the Thebans. Yes?

Reader:
As soon as the herald had delivered his message, the Plataeans, who were now in the last stages of exhaustion, surrendered the city. They were given food by the Peloponnesians for a few days, until the five judges from Sparta arrived. On the arrival of these judges, no formal accusation was drawn up. Instead the Plataeans were called forward and simply asked this one question: "Have you done anything to help the Spartans and their allies in the present war?"

LS: In the *present* war. That is to be emphasized. The prehistories aren't interesting. And—yes?

Reader:
The Plataeans asked permission to speak at greater length, and appointed as their spokesmen Astymachus, the son of Asopolaus, and Lacon, the son of Aieimnestus, who had been in charge of Spartan interests in Plataea. These two came forward and spoke about as follows: (3.52)

LS: In other words, the spokesmen for the Plataeans were people directly or through family related to Sparta and chosen for this very reason. Yes. Now, and then of course they state the case for their own salvation as strongly as they can, but admitting frankly that they cannot speak of any merits for Sparta they have acquired during the *present* war. That was during the Persian War that they behaved so nobly, but not in the present war, where they simply were the enemies of Thebes because of the enmity between Thebes and Athens. Now there are a few more passages which we should consider. Chapter 56, do you have that?

Reader: Yes.

LS: The third paragraph.

Reader: I'll just guess and estimate the third paragraph. Is it the last paragraph in the second chapter?

LS: No, it is here. It is—after the first war.

Reader:
"It cannot be reasonable that we should now suffer on their account. If you are going to take as your standards of justice your own immediate advantage and their hatred for us, you will stand confessed as the people who are more interested in pursuing their own interests than in judging sincerely between right and wrong." (3.56)

LS: Ya, this is of course what—this judgment on what the Spartans might be. It is then later on confirmed very drastically in the dialogue on the island of Melos, where the Athenian ambassadors describe the Spartans as precisely this, as being concerned exclusively with the self-interest of Sparta but always using virtue as pretext. A few more passages from this context. Chapter 58, the beginning,

Reader:
"Yet still, in the name of the gods who witnessed our alliance in the past and for the sake of our good service to Hellas, we beg you to relent, and, if you have already been won over by the Thebans, to change your minds. Ask back from them the gift you may have promised, so that you will not have to shame yourselves by killing us. Make us honestly rather than them dishonestly grateful to you, and do not, as the reward for gratifying others, win for yourselves a bad name. Our lives may be taken in a short moment, but it will be long before the infamy of that action is forgotten. So far from being your enemies, whom it would be natural for you to punish, we are friends who have been forced into the war against you. To spare our lives, therefore, would be a righteous judgement: you should consider, too, that we surrendered to you voluntarily, stretching out our hands as suppliants, and Hellenic law forbids killing in these circumstances: then also throughout our history we have done good to you. Look at the tombs of your fathers who were killed by the Persians and are buried in our country: every year we have done honour to them at the public expense, presenting garments and all the proper offerings, bringing to them the first fruits of everything which at the various seasons our land has produced; and these offerings were made by us as friends and from a friendly country, as allies to our old comrades in battle.

"But you, if you come to the wrong decision, will be acting in just the opposite way." (3.58)

LS: So here the Plataeans appeal to the pious sentiments of the Spartans in a very emphatic way, in a way which is very rare in Thucydides. Needless to say, that doesn't have the slightest effect because the Spartans are much more concerned with acquiring or preserving the goodwill of the [Thebans][i] than with their own piety or integrity, however you might call it. Then there follows in the sequel, after the Plataeans have a *fair case*. Thucydides doesn't say so, but if you look at the facts as he presents them, you will say that is a fair case, but it doesn't have a ghost of a chance of influencing their decision. Then the really unjust Thebans, the great traitors of Greece in the Persian War, make their reply in chapters 60 to 62. Perhaps we should read that.

Reader:
The Thebans, fearing that this speech might have some influence on the Spartans, came forward and said that they would also like to be heard, since the Plataeans had been allowed (unwarrantably, they thought) to speak at length instead of merely answering the question put to them. (3.60)

LS: They mean the question: "Did you do anything good to us in the present war?" And that is, they knew that they couldn't—an untrue answer was impossible; there were too many witnesses. And a true answer would be fatal, and so they made a long speech. And now the Thebans also insist on making a long speech, which comes now.

Reader:
Permission was granted, and the Thebans spoke about as follows:
"We should never have proposed making this speech if the Plataeans on their side had given a straight answer to the question asked, and had not turned on us with their accusations, at the same time praising themselves where they were not blamed, and at great length defending themselves against charges which are beside the point and which, in any case, were never made against them. As things are, however, it becomes necessary for us to answer their accusations and to examine their claims, so that neither villainy on our side nor glory on theirs may help them, but that you may hear the truth on both points and so come to your decision.

"Our quarrel goes back to the time when, after we had settled the rest of Boeotia, we founded the city of Plataea together with some other places which we held and from which we had driven out the inhabitants who were of different—"

LS: This is mentioned only in passing, that they had driven out the original inhabitants. That is beyond right and wrong. They know that this cannot be unjust, for a reason which will be made clearer or alluded to later. Yes?

Reader:
from which we had driven out the inhabitants who were of different and mixed nationalities. The Plataeans then refused to abide by the original arrangement and to recognize our supremacy. Proving false to their national traditions, they separated themselves from the rest of Boeotia, and

[i] Strauss says "Spartans," evidently in error.

when we used force against them they went over to the Athenians and, with Athenian help, did us much harm, for which they suffered some in return. (3.60-61)

"Subsequently, during the foreign invasion of Hellas they say—"

LS: The "foreign invasion" means the Persian invasion. Ya?

Reader:
they say that they were the only state in Boeotia which did not collaborate with the Persians. This is the point which they used most frequently for their own self-glorification and for deriding us. We say that the only reason why they did not collaborate was because the Athenians did not do so either, and, following up the same principle, we shall find that when the Athenians began to attack the liberties of Hellas, Plataea was the only state in Boeotia which collaborated with Athens.

"Consider, too, what type of government we each had at the time of these events. Our constitution then was not an oligarchy, giving all men equal rights before the law, nor was it a democracy: power was in the hands of a small group of powerful men, and this is the form of government nearest to tyranny[ii] and farthest removed from law and the virtues of moderation. This small group of men hoped to win even greater power for themselves if the Persian invasion was successful, and so they kept the people down by force and brought in the Persians. This was not the action of the city as a whole, since the city was not free to make its own decisions, and it ought not to be reproached for the mistakes it made when it had no regular legal government. Look at what happened after the Persians had withdrawn and Thebes had acquired a legal constitution. You will find that when Athens was encroaching upon the rest of Hellas and attempting to bring our country under their control—most of which, indeed, owing to internal dissension, they already held—we fought and conquered them at Coronea, thus liberating Boeotia; and now, too, we are joining wholeheartedly in the liberation of the other Hellenes, providing not only cavalry but larger forces than any other state among the allies." (3.61-63)

LS: Yes. Now here a question comes up which with this clarity hadn't come up before. We hear all the time of laws of cities: the Athenians, the Spartans, the Thebans, and so on. But what does this mean, a city? Was Thebes, for example, at the time of the Persian invasion a city? Was the government of Thebes at that time, because every city acts through its government, was this Thebes or were these not simply usurpers of power, tyrants? So we must make a distinction in each case between the *polis*, "the common," and a part which claims to be or to speak for the common, and only the common itself can be called the city. That seems the thought is not alien to to us. And that is the way in which the Thebans try to get out of that phase: that these traitors during the Persian War were not the Theban government, were not *Thebans* strictly speaking. That here is continued a little bit later at 65, the beginning of chapter 65.

Reader:
"Now for the final instance where you claim to have suffered from us, saying that we made an unjustified attack on your city in peacetime and during a religious festival. We think that here also we shall be found less guilty than you are. Guilty we certainly are, if it was a case of our

[ii] Warner has "dictatorship."

having initiated an armed attack on your city and laid waste your territory. But how can we be called guilty when what happened was that some of your own citizens, men of substance from the best families, voluntarily called us in because they wanted to put an end to your foreign alliances and give you back your traditional status as a part of Boeotia? As you say it is the leaders and not the followers who do the wrong. Though, in our opinion, neither they nor we did any wrong at all. They were citizens of Plataea, like yourselves, except that they had more to lose; they opened their own gates to us and took us into their own city not as enemies, but as friends, in order to prevent the bad among you from becoming worse, to give honest men their rights, to bring wisdom into your councils without depriving the city of your persons: far from it, since they were bringing you back into fellowship with your own kindred, and so far from making you the enemies of anyone, they were putting you in a position where all alike would be bound to you by treaty." (3.65)

LS: In other words, the Thebans here tried to give a respectable explanation of the breach of the covenant. This was not an invasion of Plataea in peacetime against all contracts, but on the contrary, the most respectable part of the Plataeans called in the Thebans, and therefore this was not foreign aggression but an assertion of the best part of the city of its rights against the *demos*. You see, that complication of the political issue, that you do not have merely cities but cities consisting of antagonistic parts, so that one does not really know what precisely is a city. [A] difficulty which exists in more or less disguised form at all times. You remember perhaps the farewell which de Gaulle bade to Canada, the French Canada. How did he say, "*Vive la*"—how did he call it?

Student: French Canada.[iii]

LS: French Canada.

Student: French Canada.

LS: French Canada. There is French Canada. Really does it belong to the British Empire, or is it just a consequence of aggression in the eighteenth century and therefore in no way justly British? And similar considerations could of course also be made with a view to Brittany, which was not always French, and to many other countries in the world. So then we have to begin at the beginning, return in thought to the state of nature, where people had not yet formed civil societies, and where people can begin afresh but probably with the understanding that this must be revised in every new generation, and all stability, all political life is gone. But as a background, however crazy that may seem, as a background of the political problem it is always there. A few more passages, and then we are through with that. 67, paragraph 6, towards the end of chapter 67.

Reader: All right.

LS: Where they address the Thebans' response. Ya?

[iii] De Gaulle had shouted "Vivre le Québec Libre!" during a visit to Montreal on July 24, 1967, thereby endorsing Quebec secessionism.

Reader:
"Spartans, it is for you to vindicate the law of Hellas which these men have broken, and to give to us, who have suffered from their crime, the reward due to the energy we have shown in your behalf."

LS: Ya, and so on. Now what I am interested in now is only the expression "the law of the Greeks." The law of the Greeks is the highest title to which they can defer, because if one would say: Well, the law of the Greeks, that may be based on prejudices of barbaric human beings, that means return to the state of nature with all the implications thereof. And therefore you must stop somewhere, just as all American political discussions now put the stop at the Constitution, because then you have plenty of matter for debate, if you are interested in debate. But here this law of the Greeks is of course just: one doesn't go back behind it. And that underlies the whole discussion before when they spoke of their expulsion of the indigenous population and what happened to them: that is of no interest, because the common law of the Greeks permits, of course, such expulsions of non-Greeks in the interest of Greeks. And one should not believe that Thucydides was not aware of this, but it is indeed not in the foreground because it is not in the foreground of the thoughts of the Greeks of his time. They are concerned chiefly with the Athenian–Lacedaemonian controversy. Now only the final remark towards the end of chapter 68, how the decision was reached in the Plataean business.

Reader:
They therefore brought the Plataeans before them again one by one and asked each of them the same question. "Have you done anything to help the Spartans and their allies in the war?" As each man replied "No," he was taken away and put to death, no exceptions being made. Not less than 200 of the Plataeans were killed in this way, together with twenty-five Athenians who had been with them in the siege. The women were made slaves. As for the city, they gave the use of it for one year to some political refugees from Megara and to those of the pro-Spartan party among the Plataeans who still survived. Afterwards they razed it to the ground from its very foundations and built, adjoining the temple of Hera, a large hotel 200 feet in circuit, with rooms upstairs and downstairs. For these building operations they used the roofs and doors of the Plataeans, and out of the other material in the wall—the brass and the iron—they made couches which they dedicated to Hera, for whom they also built a stone temple 100 feet square. The land they confiscated and let it out on ten-year leases to Theban cultivators. It was largely, or entirely, because of Thebes that the Spartans acted so mercilessly towards the Plataeans; they considered that at this stage of the war the Thebans were useful to them. This was the end of Plataea, in the ninety-third year after she became the ally of Athens.

LS: So in other words, as we know already by now, the Spartans consulted exclusively with their self-interest and no higher or more ancient right. That is important to keep in mind. So now this is the end of the Plataean affair. And we have read already, discussed already the Mytilenean affair, the controversy in Athens about the fate of Mytilene. Now a new theme comes up, and that is the civil war in Corcyra. You may perhaps remember that the whole history of the Peloponnesian War as Thucydides narrates it starts with the troubles in Corcyra, an island in the west of Greece, and this is taken up again in chapter 69 following. Let us only read to have the connection at chapter 70.

Reader:
Revolution in Corcyra began with the return of the—

LS: "Revolution" is of course a word which must be used with some consideration. The safest translation, I believe, is "rising." There was a rising in Corcyra, you know, like the Easter Rising in Dublin.[iv] Of course it mostly has a negative meaning; it is civil unrest, and murder, and all the other things of this kind. Yes?

Reader:
The rising in Corcyra began with the return of the prisoners who had been captured in the naval engagements off Epidamnus. The story was that these prisoners had been released by the Corinthians on the security of 800 talents put down by their official agents in Corinth; in fact they had undertaken to win Corcyra over to the Corinthian side, and they went about their business by approaching the citizens individually with the aim of detaching the city from Athens. And when a ship from Athens and a ship from Corinth arrived with accredited representatives on board, the matter was debated, and the people of Corcyra voted in favor of remaining allies of Athens in accordance with the original agreement, at the same time preserving their friendly relations with the Peloponnese. (3.70)

LS: In other words, they tried to go back to the original condition, where they were not allied with either side. You remember? Yes?

Reader:
The next step of the returned prisoners was to bring to trial Peithias, who had voluntarily offered to look after Athenian interests in Corcyra and who was the leader of the democratic party. The charge against him was that he was enslaving Corcyra to Athens. Peithias was acquitted, and retaliated by bringing to trial five of the richest of his opponents on the charge of having procured vine-props by cutting them on the ground sacred to Zeus and to Alcinous; the legal penalty was one stater for each stake. The men were condemned and, because of the amount of money they would have to pay, they took up their positions in the temples as suppliants, begging that the damage should be re-assessed. Peithias, however, who happened to be a member of the Council, persuaded his colleagues to enforce the legal penalty. Being now exposed to the full rigour of the law and at the same time learning that Peithias intended, while he was still a member of the Council, to persuade the people to make an offensive and defensive alliance with Athens, the five accused joined up with the rest of their party and, armed with daggers, suddenly broke in on the Council and killed Peithias and some sixty others, members of the Council and private individuals. (3.70)

LS: So now the civil war starts again. And now let us see the most important incidents of the sequel; first, chapter 80. So we have two parties, obviously, in Corcyra, a democratic and an antidemocratic party. And so we still have a *polis*, a city, after the city is split up in this way. Let us see chapter 80.

Reader:

[iv] A nationalist uprising in Dublin during Easter week 1916, harshly suppressed by the British.

Meanwhile, the democratic party in Corcyra were still terrified at the prospect of an attack by the enemy fleet. They entered—

LS: By the way, in the original it is not "the democratic party," but "the *demos*." The *demos*, it means the common people. A *demos* has this ambiguity, which is literal and it also has in other languages; it may mean "the people officially assembled," "the whole citizen body," but it may also mean, in the brutal language of the Greeks, "the poor." Poor does not mean those who are on welfare but those who have to earn a living in order to live. So I believe most of us would belong to the *demos* in the original meaning of the term. Yes?

Reader:
Meanwhile, the common people[v] in Corcyra were still terrified at the prospect of an attack by the enemy fleet. They entered into negotiations with the suppliants and with others of their party with a view to saving the city, and they persuaded some of them to go on board the ships. Thus they succeed in manning thirty ships to meet the expected attack.

The Peloponnesians, however, having spent the time up till midday in laying waste the land, sailed away again, and about nightfall were informed by fire signals that a fleet of sixty Athenian ships was approaching from the direction of Leucas. This fleet, which was under the command of Eurymedon, the son of Thucles, had been sent out by the Athenians when they heard that the rising had broken out and that Alcidas's fleet was about to sail for Corcyra. (3.80)

LS: Alcidas, that is this famous man whom we have met before, you know, who killed prisoners without any bad ill-will just because it was the Spartan habit to do so. Ya?

Reader:
Thus the Peloponnesians set off by night, at once and in a hurry, for home, sailing close in to the shore. They hauled their ships across the isthmus of Leucas, so as to avoid being seen rounding the point, and so they got away.

When the Corcyraeans realized that the Athenian fleet was approaching and that their enemies had gone, they brought the Messenians, who had previously been outside the walls, into the city and ordered the fleet which they had manned to sail around into the Hyllaic harbour. While it was doing so, they seized upon all their enemies whom they could find and put them to death. They then dealt with those whom they had persuaded to go on board the ships, killing them as they landed. Next they went to the temple of Hera and persuaded about fifty of the suppliants there to submit to a trial. They then condemned every one of them to death. Seeing what was happening, most of the other suppliants, who had refused to be tried, killed each other there in the temple; some hanged themselves on the trees, and others found various other means of committing suicide. During the seven days that Eurymedon stayed there with his sixty ships, the Corcyraeans continued to massacre those of their own citizens whom they considered to be their enemies. Their victims were accused of conspiring to overthrow the democracy, but in fact men were often killed on grounds of personal hatred or else by their debtors because of the money that they owed. There was death in every shape and form. And, as usually happens in such situations, people went to every extreme and beyond it. There were fathers who killed their sons;

[v] Warner has "the democratic party."

men were dragged from the temples or butchered on the very altars; some were actually walled up in the temple of Dionysus and died there. (3.81)

LS: Ya. So let us read the next chapter, but in spite of the fact that we are fully prepared for it.

Reader:
So savage was the progress of this rising,[vi] and it seemed all the more so because it was one of the first which had broken out. Later, of course, practically the whole of the Hellenic world was convulsed, with rival parties in every state—democratic leaders trying to bring in the Athenians, and oligarchs trying to bring in the Spartans. In peacetime there would have been no excuse and no desire for calling them in, but in time of war, when each party could always count upon an alliance which would do harm to its opponents and at the same time strengthen its own position, it became a natural thing for anyone who wanted a change of government to call in help from outside. In the various cities these risings[vii] were the cause of many calamities—as happens and always will happen while human nature is what it is, though there may be different degrees of savagery, and, as different circumstance arise, the general rules will admit of some variety. In times of peace and prosperity cities and individuals alike follow higher standards, because they are not forced into a situation where they have to do what they do not want to do.

LS: Ya, this "force," this "compulsion" of which we have heard before and which makes men truly savage. Yes?

Reader:
But war is a stern teacher; in depriving them of the power of easily satisfying their daily wants, it brings most people's minds down to the level of their actual circumstances.

So risings[viii] broke out in city after city, and in places where the risings[ix] occurred late the knowledge of what had happened previously in other places caused still new extravagances of revolutionary zeal, expressed by an elaboration in the methods of seizing power and by unheard-of atrocities in revenge. To fit in with the change of events, words, too, had to change their usual meanings. What used to be described as a thoughtless act of aggression was now regarded—

LS: Ya, well, "thoughtless daring."

Reader: Thoughtless daring?

LS: Ya. "Would now be called comradely bravery." Yes?

Reader:
"What used to be described as thoughtless daring was now regarded as comradely courage?" Is that—?

[vi] Warner has "this revolution."
[vii] Warner has "revolutions."
[viii] Warner has "revolutions."
[ix] Warner has "revolutions."

LS: "Courage." I mean, that—

Reader: "One." Sorry.
to think of the future and wait was merely another way of saying one was a coward; any idea of moderation was just an attempt to disguise one's unmanly character; ability to understand a question from all sides meant that one was totally unfitted for action. Fanatical enthusiasm was the mark of a real man, and to plot against an enemy behind his back was perfectly legitimate self-defence. Anyone who held violent opinions could always be trusted, and anyone who objected to them became a suspect. To plot successfully was a sign of intelligence, but it was still cleverer to see that a plot was hatching. If one attempted to provide against having to do either, one was disrupting the unity of the party and acting out of fear of the opposition. In short, it was equally praiseworthy to get one's blow in first against someone who was going to do wrong, and to denounce someone who had no intention of doing any wrong at all. Family relations were a weaker tie than party membership, since party members were more ready to go any extreme for any reason whatever. These parties were not formed to enjoy the benefits of the established laws, but to acquire power by overthrowing the existing regime; and the members of these parties felt confidence in each other not because of any fellowship in a religious communion, but because they were partners in crime. (3.82)

LS: Ya . . . the divine law, which in the context is distinguished from the human law—[x] the sickness of the body politic, the plague of the city, and one can say altogether [that] Thucydides continues this description how the civil war affected the character of the Greeks during the Peloponnesian War. The civil war is the war *par excellence*; there are still some limitations in foreign wars, limitations applied by the common law of the Greeks or by the divine law—for example, the burial of fallen soldiers[1]—but in civil war all these limitations are abolished and the pure savagery rules. So that what we have seen, you see the way in which Thucydides . . . built up, that in describing what happened in Mytilene and in Plataea, he prepares us for his description of what happened in Corcyra. Corcyra is in this respect a high point toward which we are led from the relatively milder cases, if we can use such a word here, of Plataea and and Mytilene. The civil war, one can say with a slight exaggeration, is the war *par excellence*. There you see the true image of war without any concealment, without any diminution of its terrible character.

Now the book is devoted in the first place, as we have seen, to the war of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, and this means of two political orders, two regimes, two *politeiai* [πολιτεῖαι]. But the political arrangements, what we now usually call the constitution, is too narrow a translation of the Greek term, because what the Greeks understood by a *politeia* [πολιτεία] implied also the end to which the institutions were servants. So the goals are in a way the authoritative part of the constitution.

And now there is a strange thing, this miracle that in the Peloponnesian War there is a deadly conflict not only between two cities but also between two spirits, between two ends or purposes of the regimes, say, Athenian democracy versus Spartan or Corinthian oligarchy. And this is connected with broader things: the Athenians, lovers of the new; the Spartans, lovers of the ancient. And now if we keep this in mind, this whole background of the Spartan–Athenian

[x] There is a break in the tape or the tape was changed at this point.

conflict, we understand the exemplary importance of the description of the rising in Corcyra. [2]That was in a way the high point of the Peloponnesian War. Maybe there are other events during that war which can compete in this respect with Corcyra, but we are not yet prepared for that. I think we leave it at this point and turn to a few things towards the end of the book, and then we may have a brief discussion. Let us first turn to chapter 87. Yes?

Reader:
In the following winter the plague broke out among the Athenians for the second time. In fact it had never entirely stopped, though there had been a considerable decline in its virulence. The second outbreak lasted for no less than a year, and the first outbreak had lasted for two years. Nothing did the Athenians so much harm as this or so reduced their strength for war. In the regular army no less than 4,400 hoplites and 300 cavalry died of it; and among the general mass of the people no one ever discovered how many the deaths were. It was at this time, too, that there occurred the many earthquakes in Athens, Euboea, and Boeotia, particularly in the Boeotian city of Orchomenus.

LS: Ya, here Thucydides, seemingly the chronicler of events, winter, summer, winter, summer, and so on, comes to a series of events like the second outbreak of the plague and earthquakes. We can say what he brings now in, or what he reminds us of are daemonic things again: terrible sufferings, ruin caused by daemonic things. Yes? And let us go on. But he reminds us all the time that the *war* is going and in the next sentence there is a reminder of it. Yes?

Reader:
The same winter the Athenians in Sicily and the Rhegians made an expedition with thirty ships against the islands of Aeolus, which could not be attacked during the summer months because of the lack of water there. The islands are inhabited by the Liparaeans, a colony of Cnidus, and they live in one of the islands, not a very big one, called Lipara. From this centre they go out to cultivate the other islands: Didyme, Strongyle, and Hiera. The people in those parts believe that in Hiera Hephaestus has his smithy, because at night great flames are seen rising up and in day-time the place is under a cloud of smoke. These islands lie off the coast of the Sicels and the territory of Messina, and they were in alliance with Syracuse. (3.88)

LS: And you see here we have suddenly a turn to natural events of a kind, and to what we now would call a mythical explanation of the volcano. That's Aeolus, the god of winds, who is behind that.[xi] Let us turn to chapter 89.

Reader:.
Next summer the Peloponnesians and their allies, under the command of Agis, the son of Archidamus, the King of Sparta, set out to invade Attica and got as far as the Isthmus. Here, however, there were a number of earthquakes and they turned back again, so that no invasion took place. During this same period when earthquakes were happening so frequently, at Orobiae in Euboea the sea subsided from what was then the shore and afterwards swept up again in a huge wave, which covered part of the city and left some of it still under water when the wave retreated, so that what was once land is now sea. Those of the inhabitants who were unable to escape in time by running up to the high ground were lost in the flood. An inundation of the

[xi] This contradicts the statement in the text that the locals ascribed the volcano to Hephaestus.

same kind took place at Atalanta, the place off the coast of Opuntian Locris; here part of the Athenian fortifications were swept away and one out of two ships that were drawn up on the beach was broken to pieces. At Peparethus, too, the sea sank back some distance from the shore, but this was not followed by an inundation; there was also an earthquake which destroyed part of the wall, the town hall, and a few other buildings. Events of this kind are caused, in my opinion, by earthquakes. (3.89)

LS: No, here he says what *he* believes, the judgment which *he* had formed, and not the judgment which the inhabitants of certain islands had formed. But in those cases it is a strange and amazing cooperation of nature and *nomos* which Thucydides presents and which doubtless circumscribes the outer horizon of what he is dealing with. Without these natural events, events of this kind, the war and anything in cities would not be possible. Yes?

Reader:
Where the full force of the earthquake is felt, the sea is drawn away from the shore and then suddenly sweeps back again even more violently, thus causing the inundation. Without an earthquake I do not see how such things could happen. (3.89)

LS: Ya, and then, there seems to be—

Reader: I'm sorry, chapter?

LS: 92, paragraphs 4 and 5.

Reader: "The people of Doris," is that—?

LS: "When the Spartans had heard this, they made the decision to send out a commander."

Reader: Yes.
After hearing the ambassadors, the Spartans decided to send out the colony, since they wished to help both the Trachinians and the Dorians. Also it seemed to them that the new city would be well placed for the war against Athens since it could be used as a naval base directed against Euboea, with the advantage of a very short crossing, and it would also be useful as a position lying on the route to Thrace. There was every reason, therefore, why they should be enthusiastic about founding the place.

First of all they consulted the god at Delphi, and, when they had received a favourable reply, they sent out settlers from Sparta itself and from other cities in the Spartan area; they also called for volunteers from other parts of Hellas, with the exception of the Ionians, the Achaeans, and some other peoples. The founders of— (3.92)

LS: Now the point of interest here is only that the oracle in Delphi takes the side of the Spartans, as we have already seen before near the beginning of the first book. Thucydides does not utter an *opinion* on this fact, but he thinks this is worthwhile to notice. Now this is the end of this great section: Mytilene, Plataea, Corcyra, and some seeming appendix about other contemporary events which deal with the matter of nature and *nomos*. And now we come to a new section in

chapter 94. But before we turn to that, I would like to see whether you would like to discuss something. Yes?

Student: The word which Thucydides uses to describe the activities in Corcyra is *stasis* [στάσις]. And I'd like you to comment on the meaning of that word, especially in connection with the word which he uses to describe the disturbance or movement which characterizes the Peloponnesian War as a whole.

LS: I do not know whether I physically understood you. The Peloponnesian War cannot be called a disturbance?

Same Student: No, the word which he—

Reader: I—correct me if I'm wrong. The word applied to the Corcyraeans is *stasis*.

LS: Ya.

Reader: And how does—can you explain the meaning of that that word with respect to what Thucydides says about the Peloponnesian War as a whole, the greatest . . .

LS: I see. Ya. OK.

Student: *Kinesis, kinesis-stasis,* the relation of *kinesis* to *stasis*.

LS: Ya, but still he uses two different terms. He doesn't call the civil wars, he doesn't call them *kineseis* [κινήσεις], and vice versa, he doesn't call the Peloponnesian War *stasis*. Still, there is some connection between the two things. And if he used such a huge word like "unrest" or "disturbance," it would be broad enough to cover both while making allowance for the difference between the two. But nevertheless there is not a single word, at least as far as I remember now, used for both kinds of phenomena by Thucydides. That seems to indicate that for the Greek mind, and perhaps also for the minds of other nations, the difference between a civil war and foreign war is so profound that different terms should be applied to the two things. Pardon?

Student: I find the use of the . . . word *stasis* has the meaning of "faction."

LS: Has what?

Student: The word has the meaning "faction" in the lexicon, in the sense of factional war . . . a peculiar meaning in a natural sense, of rest.

LS: Ya, but there is a connection, is there not?

Student: Yeah, but what would be that connection?

LS: I mean, the *un*rest, disturbance. A city at peace, a city at peace especially within itself, there is no *stasis* there. They can use the expression that people are not fellow citizens, *politai*

[πολῖται], but are *stasiotai* [στασιῶται], "members of factions," not fellow citizens but comrades in the sense, say, in which communists claim to be comrades. And surely that is a thing which has to be looked into, Thucydides's use of *stasis* and derivatives and see whether it is ever applied to war. As far as I remember, it is never. But one cannot trust one's memory.

But one thing I believe is clear, that what we call a civil war and what they call the *stasis* is war *par excellence*. It has all the—it is war written large, to use or misuse a Platonic expression, whereas in another war, in a normal war, there are quite a few parts of the life of the *polis* which are unaffected by the war. I'm not speaking now of twentieth-century wars but of wars in former ages. In a civil war there is *nothing* which escapes war, as is indicated by what he says about the the relations between members of the same family. But this, I believe, we must keep in mind. This double-bottom of the *polis*: on the one hand it is a unity, clearly separated from other unities of the same kind, other cities; and on the other hand the *polis* is a complex thing, consisting *at least* of the two groups called the rich and the poor, and this antagonism—the rich and the poor—may become more important for the people of a given city than the unity of their *polis* itself. And this fact alone, this was so well known to the ancients; everyone who has read Plato's *Republic* or Aristotle's *Politics*, one doesn't even have to read Thucydides to know that. [That] this fact [was] so well known shows that the Greek thinkers had to consider the possibility of a *polis* where there was no difference between rich and poor and where this basic source of discord didn't exist. And the most accessible source for this kind of thought we have, apart from Plato's *Republic* always, are some comedies of Aristophanes, where the question is discussed of course in a deliberately ludicrous way. But one can discuss very grave matters in a ludicrous manner, and those who have never read Aristophanes could perhaps read from time to time a story by Voltaire or so to see that this is possible. So the problem existed regardless of whether there was there were communistic theories in existence in Greece or not. Yes?

Student: Yeah, there is still a problem of how come that the same word for "rising" is also the word that is often used by Plato and Aristotle for "rest." Rest.

LS: *Stasis*.

Student: There is also an English word . . . cleave. . . . [xii]

LS: What kind of word is that?

Same Student: She said "cleave" . . . [xiii]

Different Student: Maybe you could spell it.

Student: C-l-e-a-v-e, it means to separate, and it means to come together.

Student: No, this is a special cleave. There is some connection here between . . . *stasis* as rest and *stasis* as rising, there is a connection . . . there are many words in English, French, German—

[xii] The student's comment is mostly inaudible, but there are several repetitions of the word "cleave."
[xiii] Other students join in the chorus of "cleave," but the rest is inaudible.

in any language, where that happens. It could be expressed by the same sound. It happens quite often.

Different Student: So this is accidental?

Different Student: Yeah. It has something to do with the stem, the very stem of the word.

LS: Ya, and that is a question which surely, which must be gone into, but that there is this duality of meaning regardless of whether there is a duality of etymologic origin, there can be no doubt. And I'm sure that sometimes it will be, this strange thing that you will call a rising, a coming to rest, can be used by witty men for witty purposes, although I don't remember an example at the moment.

Student: Do you know . . . Athens . . .

Different Student: Well, doesn't it perhaps have something to do with the fact that the word also has a sense that the root of *histēmi* [ἵστημι] has the sense of "coming to a stand."

LS: Ya, ya.

Same Student: So that in a way the stasis that means "the unrest" is also something, as we say, "taking a stand." Which is really—I mean, in a way that's an example that's almost—I mean, there is, see, there's a real parallel between the Greek and the English there, I think. "Taking a stand," which seems to be stopping somewhere, but it also is a kind of active thing, usually [to] take a stand against something. Maybe, do you think it could be translated as "taking a stand"?

LS: No, then it wouldn't come out—it could perhaps with some force, yes, but it would not quite bring right out the simple meaning which the word has when we speak of the *stasis* in Corcyra, and where the most obvious English equivalent would be "rising," "getting up." You know? And whereas in the case of *kinēsis* [κίνησις] one doesn't think of getting up in particular but of change, of any kind of change. I do not know whether there is anyone who has ever taken the trouble of giving a discussion of these two terms and their mutual relation and in the light which they throw upon one another. We cannot do that here.

Student: Mr. Strauss?

LS: Yes?

Same Student: Earlier in the discussion you said that it would become clear in a few minutes why driving out the inhabitants of a particular land in order to live there was just, and I wanted to ask whether it's—well, what you mean by just. It seems [that] necessary would be the more proper term.

LS: No! I said it became clear, meaning within the context of Thucydides. You know, we must always put some limits to our investigations, otherwise we lose our footing. Just as in ordinary

American discussions, you must take a stand, take your stand in the American Constitution, because otherwise you open up all dikes and you will be lost.

Now in here in our case, it's very simple. When Thucydides refers in a passage which we read today to the law, the common law of the Greeks, and the common law of the Greeks permits such things as the expulsion of aliens, ya?, for the expulsion for the benefits of Greeks. What Thucydides implies is: Well, this is something which cannot be *blamed*. You cannot question that. Then you would have to question altogether the occupation of mainland Greece or the Greek islands by the Greeks. And then where will you end? State of nature, whether you take the Hobbean or the Rousseauan state of nature, something which a reasonable man wouldn't wish. So you have to say, you must—at the beginning there have been some nasty things, like—not to be political, [the] same sort which happened during the migration period, you know, when the Germanic tribes came into France and Italy and so on, there were some forms of law sometimes observed, but fundamentally the whole basis of law was destroyed and it took centuries until there was something like some order.

Same Student: But then do you speak of—I mean, I can see that in Thucydides, he talks about the law of the Greeks. But in a wider context, do you have to talk about natural law or the universal law for all men?

LS: Ya, but what else can you do, if the positive law of the tribe, the nation, or whatever it is, must be questioned? And I mean it *must* be questioned; with the moment you become aware of the fact that it is just one law among a number, you *have* already questioned it. Then you have to go on, you have to seek for the natural law. There are two possibilities: either there is no way of finding it, and that is, I believe the view now prevailing: we have to live with the nonexistence of natural law and make the best of it. And then to use such words as our Western tradition, our civilization, and that means just our *laws*, not a thing more. It only has a certain quasi-scientific coloring, but it is fundamentally what every tribe in Central Africa would say: that is our tradition, our ancestors had always acted this way and we don't see a reason to change it. But the mere fact that everyone says that, with the most opposite things, shows that there is a difficulty here. And therefore, in the *whole* Western tradition, at least the moment this question became clear, it was always recognized—not by everyone, but by the predominant schools, and there must be a natural law of one kind or another. And only towards the end of the eighteenth century, in connection with the emergence of what came to be called "the historical sentiment," was this stopped and [it] was asserted that the natural law would be not the support of positive law but the *ruin* of law. And the man mentioned most frequently in connection with that is Edmund Burke, with his concept of prescription as the sole basis of law, but "prescription" meaning simply possession out of time: it was always so.[xiv] Now Burke says also the opposite, there is no doubt about that, that is not very—. But still, but this prescription conceit of his, this is what made an epoch and what led them to that enormous historical movement of the nineteenth century, the so-called historical school, and whose pupils we all are whether we like it or not, and there is now

[xiv] There is no single source in Burke for this doctrine. See, e.g., the discussions in Francis Canavan, "Burke on Prescription of Government," *Review of Politics* 35 (1973): 454-74; Paul Lucas, "On Edmund Burke's Doctrine of Prescription; Or, an Appeal from the New to the Old Lawyers," *The Historical Journal* 11 (1968): 35-63; Russell Kirk, "Burke and the Philosophy of Prescription," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 14 (1953): 365-80.

no easy way out of it. I mean, it is very easy to see the absurdities to which the ordinary view of history leads, but that is not sufficient for solving the problem.

And that is the reason why I think, among other things, one should also study Thucydides and see how Thucydides solves the problem. Thucydides does have standards of justice and injustice. What their basis is and how he justifies them, that is a long matter, but he does not call it a natural law. Plato himself does not yet speak of natural law—except in a very different meaning, I think once in *Timaeus* and once the *Gorgias*.[xv] But it doesn't mean what it meant traditionally, where it means an unchangeable law common to all men, and only to men. That came in later. It was for many centuries the guiding concept of moral or political philosophy, but it has today lost its power. Instead of that we have such things as sociology, maybe psychology; there are other things, maybe psychoanalysis even, for all I know. But there is no recognized substitute, that is clear.

Student: Mr. Strauss, may I come back for a moment—

LS: Please?

Same Student: May I come back for a moment to the Corcyraean revolution? The revolution as it is here means the change of power from one faction to another. And even human nature: this will always be, that those who are to strive and take power and rule, and then somebody else will do it. Whereas it seems that the French Revolution, also the Russian one—

LS: Ya. Ya, sure. Russian—

Same Student: have another trait, namely, the supposition that human nature is not like—is not stable, that you can change it either through reason or through sociological conditions. Therefore the revolution understood as . . . the last day of the beginning of something which is entirely—

LS: Ya, ya.

Same Student: entirely of a different nature, whereas here . . . the description and the description of . . . the lowering of the language, the absence of reason, the passions, the strife, the blood—all this is there in the French, and in the Russian too, but there is an ambition, this element that the last day, the beginning of a new—

LS: Ya, an entirely new human race, entirely new beginning. Sure. No, that is absent, clear, that the rule of earlier—I mean, generally speaking, [for] people prior to the French revolutionary wars, men will always remain men, and abolition of vice, viciousness and so on is impossible except through *miracle*. Except through miracle. But what is characteristic of the French and Russian Revolution is that vice and viciousness will be abolished *without* a miracle, by the working out of natural causes.

[xv] Plato, *Timaeus* 83a and *Gorgias* 484c.

Same Student: Yes, this is to say that this change is taking . . . from the Bible because nowhere else is there something, the very possibility of an entirely other human nature. Now in the Bible it is understood that this is a miracle, but now the revolution says, We can do it ourselves.

LS: Ya, but also surely . . . but only in the Bible this most profound change is not expected from something or anything to be called science,[3] and here it is. I mean, all these men—think of people like Condorcet and the others: the Enlightenment will make men good. And then when people saw that the Enlightenment alone wouldn't do, because evil has deeper roots, well, then people like Marx came and said: Well, ya, sure, these roots are our obsession with property and with private property and everything going with that; and therefore without communism, no human goodness, because by nature, if one can use this term here, by nature man is a beneficent being, beneficent to his fellow human beings, and if there is not such a disturbing thing there as private property and things going with that: and then men will freely and joyously collaborate, no one will even *dream* of cheating—you know, let the other fellow do the work while I sleep. And when in the beautiful passage in *State and Revolution*,[xvi] where he discusses that, the possibility that there might be such a hangover from the olden times, his answer is, in plain English (which he doesn't give in plain English) very simple: lynching!

Student: Lynching?

LS: Ya, then he will come to his senses. And somehow this belief in the goodness of human nature, a term used all the time in very different senses, but I think what they mean here—well, one can present it of course in a perfectly respectable way and simply say that what Marx means fundamentally is what Aristotle means: that to be a human being means to be a being possessed with reason; and the good life for such a being is the virtuous life, and this virtuous life consists in virtuous activity, virtuous cooperation, where no one thinks of having an advantage over his fellow citizen but they are all dedicated to the same goal. Yes, there is something to that, as someone said. There are certain Aristotelian ingredients in Marx, that I believe cannot be denied. But then there are the difficulties which Marx doesn't discuss and which Aristotle discussed at great length, namely, the rich and the poor. . . . that formula. We can also say masters and slaves, it's fundamentally the same problem. And Marx, the Marxian scheme presupposes of course that the time has come when man does no longer have to work in the way he has been forced to work up to the present time [LS raps on the table for emphasis] through the progress of technology, of course. That [that] might lead to new problems, that people have *too much* time for mischief, is not perhaps always sufficiently considered. At any rate, I believe we are not, we cannot simply close the books. We rather have to open them to think these things through from the beginning.

Now we come next to certain seemingly unconnected events, where it is hard to see whether there is any order except the chronological order, and then we turn to book 4. And I hope that maybe that we can begin next time at 3.94.

[xvi] V. I. Lenin, *State and Revolution* (NY: International Publishers, 1932) (originally published 1918), 74-75.

Session 7: no date
Book 3, chapters 94-end; book 4, chapters 1-34

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —Greek-English dictionary, Liddell-Scott, to the extent to which one reads this article, one does not get any clarity and gets the impression that the meaning of *stasis* [στάσις] as "rising" or "rebellion," "civil war," is very derivative and has nothing to do with the original meaning. And how it did acquire that meaning, whereas it meant something like "rest," "position"—for example, the position of a philosopher is called his *stasis* [στάσις]—that is wholly unclear, and if there is not some study in existence of which I do not know about the range of meanings of *stasis* and how these various meanings are related to each other, I don't know. At any rate, I am in no position to say anything useful to say on that subject. In case any one of you has any information, I would like to hear it.

Be this as it may, there can be no question that the peak of book 3 is *stasis* in Corcyra. And this is preceded by the stories of Mytilene and Plataea, an Athenian and a Spartan atrocity which bring to light the difference between Athens and Sparta. One cannot but admire the amazing grandeur of Thucydides's conception precisely in contrast with the chronicle character, summers and winters, of the whole work. The obvious premise, one can say, of the whole is of course the manyness of cities. But each *polis*, while being one, is split in two, into the *demos* and the powerful ones. And this split is, makes possible the phenomenon called *stasis*. But we also get an inkling of an extreme case, namely, of a *polis*, which is favorable to or at least compatible with history or philosophy. And that applies of course especially to the city of Athens, so that history or philosophy can in a manner become the theme of history, which it does in Thucydides's work. And therefore Thucydides doesn't think to write anything about what is now called Athenian culture, because he showed that culture, for example, by Pericles's funeral speech, but by other speeches as well and by the work as a whole. But still, that is an extreme case, rare, but perhaps more important than anything else. But we must see whether this works out. Toward the end of book 3 Thucydides's work seems to lose the perspicuity, the grand perspicuity which it had up to the Corcyra incident. There are here a variety of disconnected themes, among them daemonic things of various kinds, and the phenomena indicated by the distinction of law and nature, *nomos* [νόμος] and *physis* [φύσις]. Whether there is an underlying unity in this great variety of themes, we are not yet able to say.

So I think this is more or less the point we have reached. I think we can now go on in chapter 94 of the third book; 94, paragraph 3. Now what happens here, from chapter 94 on, are the exploits of an Athenian general who comes up here in this section for the first time and plays a role also later on in the Sicilian expedition. The name is Demosthenes—according to the tradition, a relative of Thucydides,[i] but Thucydides doesn't say anything about this, of course. Now I think we should begin in 94, paragraph 3.

Reader: Is this about the Acarnanians urging Demosthenes to blockade the city?

[i] I have been unable to find any evidence of this tradition, for which, as Strauss here admits, there is no evidence in Thucydides.

LS: Ya, ya. Demosthenes, ya.

Reader:
The Acarnanians urged the Athenian commander Demosthenes to blockade the city by building a wall to cut it off; it would be quite easy, they thought, to starve it into surrender, and this would mean getting rid of a place that had always been hostile to them.

However, Demosthenes at the same time was being persuaded by the Messenians that, with the large force now at his disposal, it would be a good idea to attack Aetolia. The Aetolians constituted a threat to Naupactus; also, if he conquered them, it would be easy to win over to the Athenian side all the other continental tribes in that area. (3.94)

LS: So that is in central Greece . . . of central Greece, a bay where it is impossible to wage war, except simultaneously on the sea and on land. If you would look up a map of Greece, any map, you would see it immediately. Yes?

Reader:
It was true that the Aetolians were a large and warlike nation, but they lived in unfortified villages scattered widely apart; they were only lightly armed, and, so the Messenians said, could be quite easily subdued before they could mobilize a united army for their defense. The Messenians urged Demosthenes first to attack the Apodotians, then the Ophionians, and finally the Eurytanians, who are the largest tribe in Aetolia, and, so it is said, speak a language which is almost unintelligible and eat their meat raw. Once these tribes were conquered, there would be no difficulty about winning over the rest. (3.94)

Should I go on?

LS: Yes.

Reader:
Demosthenes agreed to this plan, partly in order to please the Messenians, but particularly because he thought that, if the Aetolians were added to his continental allies, he would be able, without using any Athenian man-power, to invade Boeotia by land; the route would be through Ozolian Locris to Cytinium in Doris, keeping Parnassus on the right until he descended into Phocis. The Phocians, he thought, would, since they had always been friendly to Athens, willingly join him in the invasion; if not, they could be forced to do so; and, once in Phocis, he was already on the frontiers of Boeotia.

He, therefore, against the will—

LS: No, wait. Boeotia of course means the part of Greece practically ruled by Thebes, which was responsible for the destruction of Plataea, as you will remember. Yes?

Reader:

He, therefore, against the will of the Acarnanians, set out from Leucas with his whole force and sailed along the coast to Sollium. Here he told the other Acarnanians of his plan, but they gave it an unfavorable reception because he had not agreed to blockade Leucas. So he himself, with the rest of his army, the Cephallenians, Messenians, Zacynthians, and 300 Athenian citizens who were serving as marines on their own ships, started on his campaign against Aetolia. The fifteen ships from Corcyra had now returned home. (3.95)

LS: Ya. No, let us stop here for a moment. So this begins here with Demosthenes, and when we would turn to the end of book 3, you would see it's still Demosthenes. Of course there are other things discussed at the end, the last part of book 3, but Demosthenes would seem to supply the frame which keeps everything together. Yes?

Reader: Continuing on?

LS: Where you stopped, ya.

Reader:
He made his base at Oeneon in Locris, since the Ozolian Locrians were allies of Athens, and it had been arranged that they, with all their available forces, should march into the interior and join him there. As they were neighbors of the Aetolians, and were armed in the same way, it was thought that their assistance would be extremely useful because of their knowledge both of the country and of the local methods of warfare.

Demosthenes camped for the night with his army in the precinct of Nemean Zeus, where the poet Hesiod is said to have been killed by the local inhabitants, having been told by an oracle that he was destined to suffer this fate at Nemea— (3.95-96)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. That is the sole mention of Hesiod in Thucydides. And given the fact that he is so extremely reticent about Greek culture, that calls at least for our attention. We will see Homer comes up very soon also, but Hesiod at least is mentioned here a single time. What this means is a long question. What Hesiod did was this: he obviously disregarded an oracle, and to his peril. He was killed! Thucydides of course does not say that this *was* so, he only says that is what people say about it. But this means that Thucydides had so few of what some people call anecdotes, we must at least take notice of them. Yes. Now let us turn to the next chapter, 97, paragraph 2, and let us begin with the beginning of chapter 97.

Reader:
The Messenians, however, continued to give Demosthenes the same advice as before. They assured him that the conquest of Aetolia was a simple matter, and urged him to push on as fast as possible, capturing the villages one by one as he came to them, and not to allow the whole people time to oppose him with a united army. Led on by this advice, and trusting in his own luck, since so far nothing had gone wrong, Demosthenes did not wait for the Locrian reinforcements who were due to arrive and who would have made up—

LS: Ya, one second. He trusts *tyche* [τύχη], chance, because everything has gone fine hitherto. That is also a kind of oracle in which Demosthenes believes, and as we shall find out soon, he

will have a fate not altogether dissimilar to that of Hesiod. Perhaps there is something Hesiod . . . in Demosthenes, but we cannot say that with any definiteness.

Now what happens is indeed an Athenian defeat, Athenian defeat, and there is one passage of special interest in chapter 98, paragraph 4.

Reader: About the retreating army?

LS: No, "there fell many of the allies," and of the Athenians themselves, about a hundred twenty hoplites. You have that?

Reader: Yes.

Student: [Reading, to help reader] "Great numbers of the allies were killed, together with about 120 hoplites." First paragraph.

Reader:
Great numbers of the allies were killed, together with about 120 hoplites from Athens itself. These Athenians, so many of them and all in the prime of life, were certainly the best men from the city itself who perished in this war. Demosthenes' colleague, Procles, was also killed. (3.98)

LS: Ya. Now listen. Of course he doesn't say they were the best men [who] were killed in this war, the Peloponnesian War together, but surely the best men who were killed in the Peloponnesian War up to this point. This is of some importance retrospectively for our judgment about the people who fell at the very beginning of the war and who were eulogized by Pericles in the funeral speech. These men would have deserved a still more splendid funeral speech than the people who were celebrated by Pericles, and some of whom surely were, as is indicated somewhere in the funeral speech, good-for-nothings but had a noble end. And that is also a slight, I think, ingredient of Thucydides's irony, that one has to see both sides. Why do you make such a face? Ya? Oh, I'm sorry. Good! I thought . . . Ya. Now go on where you left off.

Reader:
After recovering their dead from the Aetolians under an armistice, the army returned to Naupactus, embarked on their ships and went back to Athens. Demosthenes stayed behind either at Naupactus on in the area, since he was afraid to face the Athenians after what had happened. (3.98)

LS: Ya. That I think is of the utmost importance for the whole work. You remember what Thucydides said in his final appraisal of Pericles in 2.65: that Pericles really guided the people for their best, and he was an unrivaled leader. But after his death, then the bad guys came and the unity ceased to exist, with the natural, necessary consequences: the ruin of Athens. But he doesn't say anything there about another point which was doubtless also due to the death of Pericles, as there was not a single man of overriding—I think they called it *charisma* [χάρισμα]. And that was this; that people, the generals, good generals, courageous generals, competent generals, could not bear to do their best because in case of defeat they had to fear the resentment of the *demos*.

There is a chapter in Machiavelli's *Discourses*, book 1, chapter 28, which is entitled roughly, "Why the Romans were less ungrateful to their generals than the Athenians."[ii] The great example, of course, is what Rome did after their defeat in Cannae, you know, where they honored the defeated general Varro, who was responsible for the whole misery, whereas the Athenians were very far from such a generosity. And this leads to the consequence, Machiavelli . . . that the general always has look over his shoulder: What will the *demos* at home say if I lose the battle? And then his military competence will be impaired by it. And that will have very great consequences later on, because it is a premonition of what happens in Sicily, where Nicias, finally in command of the whole expedition, does not dare to return to Athens after the situation was already practically hopeless because he felt it was much more decent to fall in battle against the Syracusans and Spartans than to be executed in Athens. [1][Those] were the alternatives; victory was out of the question. So that if after Pericles a certain *selfishness* corrupted Athenian military and political leaders, this is not merely the selfishness of greed and low ambition but the defensible, or rather defensible selfishness of fear to be *murdered*.

This throws some light also on the most terrible act of treason described in this book, namely, Alcibiades's. Whether Alcibiades was guilty or innocent in that famous story of which we will hear later, that is unknown. We have no evidence more than what we find in Thucydides—Thucydides doesn't say anything about it—unless we take Plato's *Banquet* as a source, which I believe I would not hesitate to do. And then Alcibiades did something most improper, but whether this most improper thing deserved capital punishment is still a question. At any rate, we must never forget these things to which Thucydides only alludes but which were a crucial part of the Athenian situation, of the *demos*, the Athenian *demos*.

Then Thucydides goes on in the next chapters, 99 to 103, to speak about operations in central Greece and Sicily. They are connected somehow. We cannot devote any time to them. Let us turn to chapter 104. Yes?

Reader:
In the same winter the Athenians, no doubt because of some oracle, carried out ceremonies of purification on Delos. In former times the tyrant Pisistratus also had purified the island, though not the whole of it—only as much of it as could be seen from the temple. On the present occasion, however, the whole island was purified in the following way. All the tombs of those who had died in Delos were dug up, and it was proclaimed that in future no deaths or births were to be allowed in the island; those who were about to die or to give birth were to be carried across to Rhenea, which is so close to Delos that when Polycrates, the tyrant of Samos, and ruler over so many other islands, in the period of his naval supremacy, conquered Rhenea, he dedicated it to the Delian Apollo by binding it to Delos with a chain.

After the purification the Athenians celebrated for the first time the five-yearly festival of the Delian games.

[ii] The title of *Discourses* 1.28 is "What made the Romans less ungrateful to their Citisens than were the Athenians."

LS: Now let us stop here for one moment. So this purification of Delos probably connected with the misery which has happened in the meantime, another outbreak of the plague. But in what does the purification consist, or what does it presuppose? That both deaths and births pollute, and therefore on this sacred island of Apollo neither burials nor birth must take place. This is—yes. But now after this, what played, we can say, this previously limited purity of Delos is extended to the whole island. Yes?

Reader:
After the purification the Athenians celebrated for the first time the five-yearly festival of the Delian games. There had been also in the distant past a great gathering of the Ionians and neighbouring islanders at Delos. They used to come there to the festival with their wives and children, just as the Ionians now go to the festival at Ephesus, and they used to hold contests there in athletics, poetry, and music, each city producing its own chorus. That this was so is made perfectly clear by the following lines of Homer, from his hymn to Apollo—

I am not sure I will read this properly.

LS: Ya, read it, read it, read it.

Reader:
Chiefly, O Phoebus, your heart found delight in the island of Delos.
There, with their long robes trailing, Ionians gather together,
Treading your sacred road, with their wives and their children about them,
There they give you pleasure with boxing and dancing, and singing,
Calling aloud on your name, as they set in order the contests.

And in the following lines, from the same hymn, he makes it clear that there were also contests in music and poetry and that the Ionians went there to take part in them. After celebrating the Delian dance of the woman, he ends his praise of them with these verses, in which also he refers to himself— (3.104)

LS: . . .

Reader: I didn't understand.

LS: I mean, Homer speaks in that hymn about himself. Now that is important. Yes?

Reader:
Maidens, I say farewell to you all, and I pray that the favor
Light on you of Apollo and Artemis. Then in the future
Think of me, and whenever some other man among mortals
Weary with travel comes to this place and questions you, saying
"*Tell me, maidens, the name of the man who is sweetest of singers.*
Tell me the name of the one in whom you have chiefly delighted."
Then, in your gentle way, you must all together make answer
"*Blind is the singer. He lives in the rock-bound island of Chios.*"

LS: Ya. So now today it would be told, and probably with right, that this is not Homer but belongs to the so-called Homeric hymns. You know there was a large body of literature surrounding what we call now Homer but which was regarded, even by such a critical reader as Thucydides, as genuine. We cannot . . . But what does it mean in the context? That is the important point. We have seen that shortly before Hesiod was mentioned. But this was child's play compared with what he has done here with Homer, with his praise of Homer. What does this mean? Let us read the next paragraph.

Reader:
We thus have the evidence of Homer that in ancient times also there was a great gathering and festival at Delos. Later the islanders and the Athenians still sent choruses and sacred offerings, but the contests and most of the other ceremonies were discontinued, probably because of the difficulties of the times, and remained out of use until this occasion when the Athenians celebrated the games, including in them horseracing, which was a new event. (3.104)

LS: Ya. So in other words, there was a beautiful past, the time of Homer, and then there came these various kinds of misery, and therefore these famous festivities were more or less stopped. But then the Athenians restored it, and in a way even *improved* on it by adding the horseraces. But we must take this together with what we had read earlier, especially in the first book and to some extent also in the funeral speech, about Thucydides's—how should I say it, "quote philosophy of history." The terrible beginnings, the poor beginnings, savage and barbaric, and then very gradually and very slowly, power, wealth, Greekness emerged. And now something, the opposite: there is not only growth, progress, *epidosis* [ἐπίδοσις], there is also the opposite. Are we prepared for that by what we have read hitherto? Was there ever made any suggestion in this direction?

Student: Only by opposition, in a way. Pericles, in the beginning of his funeral speech, speaks of going against the laws of the ancestors, and here there is—

LS: Against the *laws* of the ancestors. But that, but because that was a foolish law. It was progress.

Same Student: But here this is the opposite.

LS: No, Pericles is absolutely on the progressive side.

Same Student: But what is this?

LS: Surely not progressive. But did we have, did we get an inkling of a nonprogressive view? Mr. Berns?

Mr. Berns: Well, one wonders about the plague. I mean, could the plague have been so awful if there had not been a city for it to take place in?

LS: Ya. But still, that is understood, that daemonic miseries may happen at all times. There is no promise of a messianic future here.

Student: Could you be referring to the decline in the level of speech, of Pericles down to Cleon?

LS: Nothing said about that. But something very simple, we discussed it.

Student: In the speech of Diodotus about crime—

LS: Ya, ya.

Same Student: he's alluded to a golden age of—

LS: Exactly, exactly. That, I think, is an important parallel to what he does here. There is this—so to that extent Diodotus and this reference to Homer come together. Thucydides is not a simple-minded believer in progress or in growth, *epidosis* [ἐπίδοσις], as he seemed to be according to his account of the early past, the so-called *Archaelogy*. And indeed, Diodotus's speech, and what he says about the absence of punishment from the olden times, is in full agreement with this. So if this is inserted here, this Homer story after the defeat of Demosthenes. One cannot put—I mean, whether there is any deeper connection between Demosthenes and Diodotus is very [much] in doubt, because we know absolutely nothing about Diodotus, so we must leave this entirely open. At any rate, what comes next is a victory of Demosthenes after some . . . part of Central Greece, in which he had been defeated before. Now let us turn to chapter 113.

Student: Can I ask a question first before we move on?

LS: Sure!

Same Student: I don't, I still don't quite understand the point you're making about the, well the story of two origins—both a sort of the golden past, where human beings were more perfect, and the past were men were beasts. I don't quite, I don't see—I mean, are you suggesting that he's not sure himself what the origins of things are, or—?

LS: No, I was not *suggesting* it. I only say that the impression which he gives through his account of the olden times—savage beginnings, slow rise to wealth, power and refinement—is to be corrected, according to his indications. There was something else there which however in his case had nothing to do with oracles or the divine interventions. You know? That had something to do, say, with Homer.

Same Student: You mean that there was a rise from savagery up to a peak and then it decline to the time of Thucydides? I mean, a—

LS: Yes, but we don't know, [we] don't have enough data to decide it with that definiteness which you'd like.

Same Student: Well, I was asking—

LS: At any rate, there was something—well, if one reads Greek texts on this subject from the classical times, one sees there are two schools of thought. One, which is today particularly famous and highly regarded: progress. Ya? There are very fat books, I believe, about it. And then there are also other things which speak of the past as most venerable. So the conflict is so great that people have had the courage to speak of a liberal and a conservative, i.e., reactionary tradition. Ya? I mean, the venerable past: think of Sparta, where it was particularly respected, but also in Athens! Then on the other hand, the contempt for the past . . . that existed, coexisted. And the interesting point is that in Thucydides, whom at first glance one would count only among the progressivists, we have important traces at least in two places of the opposite view, and we must keep this in mind and see in it one of the many signs that his horizon was much broader than that of most of his contemporaries. But the general view, I mean, when you read Aristotle, for example, is clear: the past, slow, slow rise. Ya? Even in Plato, where this is a bit more hidden, but even in Plato, you could . . . But there is also this other tradition, living on the splendor of Homeric and Hesiodic poetry, which says the opposite. And therefore this praise of Homer, this self-praise of Homer is so important. Thucydides himself would never have spoken about himself in the way in which his Homer speaks about himself. But Thucydides was not a poet; he did not—it wasn't his style to adorn things so that they become grander than they are, what his Homer in a way does, but not only in the hymns but also in his poetry.

Now let us see. Ya, Demosthenes's victory, and let us turn to chapter 113, paragraph 3.

Reader: About the heralds coming, meeting one another?

LS: No, when this, when this herald comes and asks, and wants to have, to negotiate about the surrender of the corpses.

Reader:
He had come to ask permission to take up the dead who had been killed after the first battle when they had gone out with the Mantineans, although not included in the agreement by which the Mantineans were covered. When the herald saw the arms that had been taken from the Ambraciots who had come from the city, he was amazed at the number of them, since he did not know what had happened and imagined that the arms were those from the Ambraciot army to which he belonged himself. Someone, under the mistaken idea that the herald had come from the troops at Idomene, asked him what he was so surprised about and inquired how many had been killed. 'About two hundred,' said the herald.

'Not if we are to judge by the arms here,' said the other man, taking him up. 'Why, they come to more than a thousand.'

'Then,' said the herald, 'they cannot be the arms of those who were fighting with us.'

'They certainly are,' said the other—'that is, if you were fighting at Idomene yesterday.'

'But there was no fighting at all yesterday,' said the herald. 'It was the day before, in the retreat.'

'However that may be,' the other man said, 'we were certainly fighting with these men yesterday. It was a relief force coming from the city of the Ambraciots.'

On hearing this, the herald realized that the reinforcements coming from the city had been destroyed. He cried out loud, and, overwhelmed by the extent of the disaster, went away at once without doing what he came to do and without asking any more for the recovery of the bodies.

In fact, this was, in all the war, certainly the greatest disaster that fell upon any single Hellenic city in an equal number of days. I have not recorded the numbers of the killed, because the number said to have been destroyed is incredible, considering the size of the city. However, I do know that if the Acarnanians and Amphilochians had been willing to follow the advice of Demosthenes and the Athenians and to seize Ambracia, they could have done so without striking a blow. As it was they feared that if the Athenians occupied the place, they would be even more dangerous neighbours to them than those they had now. (3.113)

LS: Ya. That is also a rarity. Here this is again a speech, but surely not a speech of the usual Thucydidean speeches. Thucydides tells a dialogue as it happened, without transforming it in any way. He renders the *logos* of the character in question *literally*, perhaps because he is here particularly concerned with literal factual truth, but whether that is a sufficient explanation is a question. There are very few other cases of this kind, where such very brief utterances of participants are literally quoted, and one must really wonder why Thucydides does this. There are other difficulties of this kind, and I mentioned in another point that Thucydides—[iii] so if one can describe the situation under Pericles as follows, there was perfect harmony between the common good and the private good, meaning the private good of Pericles, this harmony was destroyed after Pericles. But now, after the victory, the belated victory of Demosthenes in Aetolia, it seems that this original harmony was restored, and so one could again do something reasonable. Whether this is the case or not, we must wait. So then we have reached more or less the end of the book, the end of the book in chapter 116. Let's read it, since we are at it.

Reader: This is the last paragraph on page 229, or second to last.

At the very beginning of spring, as had happened on former occasions, a stream of lava came down from Etna and destroyed some of the land of the Catanians, who lived on the slopes of Etna, which is the biggest mountain in Sicily. It is said that this was the first eruption for fifty years, and that, since Sicily was colonized by the Hellenes there have been three eruptions in all.

These were the events of this winter, and with it ended the sixth year of this war recorded by Thucydides.

LS: Ya. So it ends again, the book, with a daemonic event, and a daemonic event in Sicily. This opens vistas for the future, the future which we will soon see. Now in the post-Periclean section, by which I mean the section following the death of Pericles, there we are particularly struck, at least I [am], by Diodotus, Hesiod, and Homer—there is probably some connection between the two—and Demosthenes. Now could these three be the counterparts to Pericles, Cleon, and

[iii] There is a break in the tape or the tape was changed at this point.

progress? That's a question which, I believe, one cannot wholly avoid. But don't forget, I beg you, the many wholly unsolved questions we have left by the side, like, for example, [the question] of the relation between the human and daemonic sufferings, and this strange—I mean, for example, this fact that Sicily comes in all the time. That is not so surprising, because the military operations that start in book 3 in central Greece: that is on the *way* to Sicily, and there is some connection between them and it is a relatively simple one. So shall we then turn to book 4? Mr. Berns?

Mr. Berns: Yeah, it seemed to me that perhaps one point you made needed a little more argument, and the—it's not simply obvious that the fear of generals because of defeats that they would have, fear of the *demos* if they were defeated, it's not perfectly clear that that—I mean, someone could argue that that could spur them on to only get victories. In other words, turning the motive of fear into honor, say.

LS: Ya, but on the other hand, if a general is defeated, he is bound to have some enemies, domestic enemies, and some of them will not hesitate to say [that] he had been bribed by the enemy. What kind of a *court* will decide? Surely not—surely a dangerous method to say: Either win or you will be decapitated. It means a gross underestimation of *tychê* [τύχη], unforeseeable things which can transform probable victory into disastrous defeat.

So I suggest that we turn now to book 4. And book[s] 4 and 5 belong in a way together. They describe the last part of what Thucydides occasionally calls the first war, meaning the war prior to the Peace of Nicias in 421, and books 6 to 8 deal then with the second war, namely, the war after that cold war, which was the Peace of Nicias. So book 4 deals with the end of the first war and the ensuing cold war. And now we come to another extraordinary and wholly unforeseen development, at the very beginning of book 4. Will you read that, please?

Reader: First chapter?

LS: Ya.

Reader:
Next summer, at the time when the corn was beginning to ripen, ten Syracusan and ten Locrian ships sailed to Messina in Sicily and took over the place on the invitation of the inhabitants. (4.1)

LS: Ya, well, no—I am sorry, no, we don't need to read this all. These first forty-one chapters of book 4 deal with a telling victory of the Athenians at Pylos—that is on the west coast, an island on the west coast of the Peloponnesus. And the true victor was Demosthenes, but we must add an unpleasant qualification: the victory was due to Cleon. Demosthenes engineered the thing in a wonderful way from a military point of view, but that this military expedition led to the telling the size of that, that was due to Cleon. And there are long discussions [about] whether Thucydides's loathing, and contempt, hatred of Cleon did not force him to give a very partial and unfair description of Cleon. We have to look at that question when we come to it. But we of course we have first to start. Now let us see at the beginning of chapter 2, paragraph 3.

Reader:

Meanwhile, the Athenians sent out to Sicily the forty ships which they had been equipping, with the other two generals, Eurymedon and Sophocles. The third general, Pythodorus, had already arrived in Sicily. Eurymedon and Sophocles were also instructed, as they sailed up the coast, to do what they could for the Corcyraeans in the city who were suffering from the raids made on them by the exiled party in the mountains.

LS: You remember, after the civil war. Ya?

Reader:
Sixty Peloponnesian ships had also sailed to support the exiles and, since there was a serious famine in the city, their view was that it would be easy to gain control of affairs there. Demosthenes, since his return from Acarnania, held no official position, but the Athenians allowed him, at his own request, to make what use he liked of this fleet of theirs on its way round the Peloponnese.

LS: That is important. Demosthenes is a private citizen and an experienced general, and he is now in the good graces of the *demos*, and so he is permitted to go on that expedition. That is the beginning of the whole story, on which everything else depends. Yes?

Reader:
When they were off the coast of Laconia, they heard that the Peloponnesian ships had already arrived at Corcyra. Eurymedon and Sophocles were for hurrying on to Corcyra, but Demosthenes wanted them first to put in at Pylos to carry out his plan, and then to sail on from there. The others objected, but a storm happened to get up, and so the ships were forced to go to Pylos. (4.3)

LS: Ya. The storm happened, and that was a *chance*, a chance: no one could predict that, and Demosthenes would have been easily overruled, especially since he held no official power, but then this storm gave him this opportunity. And so *tychê* [τύχη] plays here a great role in the whole story, as you will see very soon. Yes?

Reader:
Demosthenes immediately proposed—

LS: No, let us skip—we cannot read everything. Let us see, in chapter 4, the end. No, let us read the whole of chapter 4.

Reader:
Demosthenes then put his plan up for consideration to the company commanders, but he failed to convince either the generals or the army of its merits. So he remained there doing nothing during the period of bad weather, until the soldiers themselves, who were tired of having nothing to do, suddenly had the idea of forming themselves into gangs and building fortifications for the place. So they set to work and kept on with it. They had no iron tools for shaping the stones, but they picked them out by hand, carried them along, and arranged them so that they would fit in with each other. Where mortar was required, they carried it on their backs (since they had no hods), stooping down, so as to carry as much of it as possible, and clasping their hands behind them to prevent it slipping off. In fact they did everything they could to hurry on with the work and to

finish the more vulnerable parts before the Spartans could come up to attack it. For most of the place was itself a natural stronghold and did not require any fortifying.

LS: Ya, natural stronghold: "most of the place was itself strong." "Itself" means what could have been said, "was by nature strong," but it is said here, "self." That is only of some interest also with the Platonic use of the word, term "self," the "thing itself": that is what it is by nature, without any human artifice. And you see here how chance plays a role: the soldiers are bored, and out of that boredom, they listen to Demosthenes and fortify the island so that the Spartans won't have an easy access to it. Yes. Later on in chapter 6, Thucydides speaks of other accidents, acts of chance, which favor the Athenians. You could perhaps read chapter 6. It is not very long. Yes?

Reader:
When the Peloponnesians in Attica heard of the capture of Pylos, they immediately withdrew and returned home. The Spartans and Agis, their King, considered that here was a threat to their vital interests; also the invasion had taken place early, while the corn was still green, so there was a general shortage of provisions; then, too, the weather had been much more rainy and stormy than might have been expected at this time of the year, and this had caused hardship in the army. There were various reasons, therefore, for the early withdrawal and for this invasion being a very short one. They only stayed fifteen days in Attica. (4.4)

LS: You see, it was all unforeseen and unforeseeable and acts of chance. Chapter 10, speech of Demosthenes to the Athenian soldiers

Reader: Should I read it?

LS: Ya, only the beginning.

Reader:
"Soldiers, all of us together are in this, and I do not want any of you in our present awkward position to try to show off his intelligence by making a precise calculation of the dangers which surround us; instead we must simply make straight at the enemy, and not pause to discuss the matter, confident in our hearts that these dangers, too, can be surmounted. For when we are forced into a position like this one, calculations are beside the point: what we have to do is to stake everything on a quick decision. And in fact I consider that the odds are on our side, so long as—"

LS: And so on. Now at any rate, here we see an Athenian city, famous for its reasoning, thrown into a situation, into a compulsion by chance, in which he has to rely on hope and as it were with closed eyes face the danger. That will be—hope will play a great role later on in Sicily. And then he speaks more of the unforeseeable things which are particularly likely on the sea, and they have—after all, they have landed on Spartan soil, coming from the sea, and so the sea being a source of these great troubles which they have. And then the Spartan, the lee force, arrives and here is a brief scene pregnant with further developments in chapter 11, paragraph 4, where Brasidas is mentioned.

Reader:
The Athenians now had to defend themselves on both sides, from the land and from the sea. The enemy came up in detachments of a few ships at a time, since there was no room to bring greater numbers inshore, and, while some rested, others kept up the attack, showing the greatest enthusiasm, and cheering each other on in their efforts to force back the defenders and capture the fortification. It was Brasidas who distinguished himself more than anyone else. He was in command of a trireme, and when he saw that, because of the difficult nature of the ground, the captains and steersmen, even at points where it did seem possible to land, were hanging back for fear of damaging their ships, he shouted out to them, asking them what was the point in sparing ships' timbers and meanwhile tolerating the existence of an enemy fortress in their own country, telling them to break up their ships so long as they forced a landing, and appealing to the allies, in return for all the benefits they had received from Sparta, to sacrifice their ships now for her sake, to run them aground, to make a landing some way or other, and to overwhelm the place and its defenders. (4.11)

LS: Ya. But it doesn't help him very much: he is knocked out, and the Athenians win that battle. But you see here that Brasidas is not given a speech, whereas Demosthenes has been given one. And that had something to do with the fact that Brasidas was a Spartan–laconic, and Demosthenes an Athenian. Later on Thucydides will say of Brasidas that he was quite eloquent, measured by Spartan standards, which means by rather low standards in this respect.

Now this battle, first battle at Pylos has a peculiar character. Now let me see. Yes, that is in chapter 12.3, the last paragraph of chapter 12. This reversal of chance, ya?

Reader:
It was indeed a strange alteration in the ordinary run of things for Athenians to be fighting a battle on land— and Spartan land too—against Spartans attacking from the sea, and for Spartans to be trying to make a naval landing on their own shores, now hostile to them, against Athenian opposition. For at this time Sparta chiefly prided herself on being a land power with an unrivalled army and Athens on being a sea power with the greatest navy in existence.

LS: Ya. So the Athenians acting as a land army and the Spartans as a navy. And now this again foreshadows later developments. The defeat of the Athenian navy at Syracuse, which was the end of the Sicilian expedition, was also a work of fate. At any rate, the Athenians make good their establishment at Pylos and the Spartans are panicky, and they send an embassy to Athens and appear there in the popular assembly. That is in chapter 17. This is of course also not a literal speech[2]: they said that having come to Athens, they said *about* what follows.

By the way, there is no speech of an Athenian embassy in Sparta. There was a speech of the Athenians in book 1, but this was not an official embassy. These were Athenians who happened to be in Sparta[iv] and felt that it was important for them to appear in the Spartan assembly and state the case for Athens. But here we have Spartans in Athens, Spartans officially sent by the government.

[iv] Strauss misspeaks here: at 1.72.1 and again at 1.73.1 Thucydides indicates that these Athenians were in Sparta on official business, just not the business on which unforeseen circumstancesthey now compel them to speak before the Spartan assembly.

Reader: Read that speech?

LS: Ya, it is too long. We cannot read it—we must only see. Chapter 17, paragraph 4, there is a warning which the Spartans address first to the Athenians. Yes?

Reader:
"You are now in a position where you can turn your present good fortune to good use, keeping what you hold and gaining honour and reputation besides. Thus you will avoid the mistake so often made by those who meet with some extraordinary piece of good luck and then go on pressing forward in the hope of more still, because of the very unexpectedness of their first success. But those who have had most—"

LS: "First, good fortune." With a word, a compound with *tyche* [τύχη] in it. Yes?

Reader:
"But those who have had the most experience of changes both for the better and the worse are rightly the least inclined to believe that good luck will last. Certainly both your city and ours have had experience enough to learn this lesson." (4.17)

LS: Ya. And a little bit later, in chapter 18, where they are warned again, the Athenians, that they owe their success to *chance*, and they should not be confused in their minds by this fact. "You Athenians have been lucky." Ya? In chapter 18, in about the middle of that paragraph, of the chapter, and then read the end of it, that's chapter 18.

Reader:
"This, Athenians, is what you have the opportunity to do now with us, and so to avoid what may happen later, if you fail to agree with us and afterwards, as is quite possible, suffer a defeat. For then it would be thought that even your present successes were merely due to luck—"

LS: You see? After having emphasized "it was only due to luck," he retracts it, slyly. These are not very clever speakers. Yes?

Reader: Finish?

LS: Ya, let's finish.

Reader:
"but then it would be thought that even your present successes were merely due to luck, whereas now you are in a position to leave behind you a safe and sure reputation both for strength and for wisdom."

Continue?

LS: Ya, a bit.

Reader:
"Sparta calls upon you to make a treaty and to end the war. She offers you peace, alliance, friendly and neighbourly relations. In return she asks for the men on the island, thinking it better for both sides that the affair should not proceed to the bitter end—whether, by some stroke of luck, the men should manage to force an escape, or else be subdued by your blockade and fall still further into your power." (4.19)

LS: Ya. So so they have stated in what spirit negotiations should take place, and now they come to the specifics. I'll mention only a few ones: in chapter 20, in the middle of chapter 20, where they speak [about] why it is so wise for Athens and Sparta now to make peace, although they haven't achieved anything of what they intended to achieve, the liberation of Greece from Athenian tyranny. But they didn't wish to lose their nobility, and because it so happened that their nobility was caught on that island and very influential people in Sparta wanted to get them out of this unpleasant situation as soon as possible, by hook and by crook. Now in the middle of that chapter, he says, "for now they wage war, both sides, and it is wholly unclear who had *begun* it." You know? Do you have that passage?

Reader: This is in the middle of 20?

LS: Ya.

Reader:
"As for the war in which they are engaged, they are not certain who began it; but peace now depends chiefly upon you, and if peace is made, it is to you that their gratitude will go."

LS: Now you see the Spartans knew of it, about how the war began. But that was one great moral consequence of Demosthenes's deed at Pylos, that the Spartans are no longer so sure that they are in the right. Now they had of course been told by Apollo that he would come to their help, called or uncalled, but when they are in these troubles in Pylos, they don't send to Apollo, asking him whether they should send an embassy to Athens. They simply follow their ordinary human understanding, that the only way to get their men free is to make peace and swallow the bitter pill. Ya. And now what happens is that the Spartans make their offer, and the offer is declined at the instigation of Cleon, to whom they offer much too little, so nothing comes out of that. And then Thucydides goes on with something seemingly extraneous, namely, Sicilian affairs. But there is a constant interplay between the central Greek and the Sicilian affairs. And here there is one passage which is of special interest in the twenty-fourth chapter, when he speaks of the Charybdis. Ya? Will you read that, please?

Reader:
This is the stretch of sea between Rhegium and Messina at the point where Sicily is nearest to the continent. It is the Charybdis of the legends through which Odysseus is supposed to have sailed. Indeed it has quite naturally got the name for being a dangerous place because of the narrowness of the channel and the strength of the currents that pour into it from the two great seas on either side, the Tyrrhenian and the Sicilian. (4.24)

LS: Ya, and is therefore thought to be naturally particularly difficult. These are stories, Homeric stories, which are in a way refuted, of course, by the experience of Greek sailors of later times. That has something to do with the question of progress or no progress we have discussed before. And now we come to a very *strange*, but at the same time—no, a strange and fantastic happening in the Athenian assembly, which I believe we should read, in chapter 27, paragraph 3. In Athens—in spite of the fact that Cleon was so successful in turning down the Spartan embassy, in Athens there was a certain mood for peace. After all, they suffered quite a bit owing to the Spartan invasions. Now what does Cleon do there, in this situation?

Reader:
As for Cleon, he realized that he was becoming unpopular because of the part he had played in preventing the agreement, and he declared that those who brought news from Pylos were not telling the truth. The messengers then suggested that, if the Athenians did not believe them, they should send out inspectors to see for themselves, and Cleon himself was chosen together with Theagenes for this post. He now realized that he would be compelled either to come back with the same report as that of the men whom he had just been attacking or else, if he said the opposite, be shown up as a liar; but he saw that the general feeling among the Athenians was not averse from sending out another expeditionary force, and so he told them that they ought not to be sending out inspectors and wasting time and letting their opportunities slip away from them; instead, if they believed in the truth of what had been reported, they should sail out against the men. He then pointed at Nicias, the son of Niceratus, who was then general and whom he hated. Putting the blame on him, he said that, if only the generals were real men, it would be easy to take out a force and capture the Spartans on the island; certainly he himself would have done so, if he had been in command.

At this there was a certain amount of murmuring among the Athenians against Cleon for not being willing to sail now, if the whole thing seemed to him so easy, and Nicias, noticing this and at the same time finding himself attacked by Cleon, told him that, so far as the generals were concerned, he could take out whatever force he liked and see what he could do himself. Cleon's first impression was that this offer was only made as a debating point, and so he was ready enough to accept it; but when he realized that the command was being handed over to him quite genuinely, he began to back out of it, saying that it was Nicias, not he, who was general. He was now indeed thoroughly scared, since he never imagined that Nicias would have gone so far as to give up his post to him. Nicias, however, repeated his offer and called the Athenians to witness that he was standing down from the command in Pylos. The Athenians behaved in the way that crowds usually do. The more that Cleon tried to get out of sailing to Pylos, and the more that he tried to take back what he had said, the more they encouraged Nicias to hand over his command and they shouted at Cleon, telling him that he ought to sail. The result was that Cleon, finding that there was no longer any possibility of going back on what he had said, undertook to go on the voyage. He came forward and said that he was not frightened of the Spartans and would sail without taking a single man from Athens, only the Lemnians and Imbrians who were in the city and the peltasts who had come from Aenus to offer their help and 400 archers who were available from other quarters. With this force, together with the troops now at Pylos, he claimed that within twenty days he would either bring the Spartans back to Athens alive or would kill them on the spot. This irresponsible claim caused a certain amount of laughter, though the more intelligent members of his audience were not displeased with it, since they calculated that they

would enjoy an advantage either way; either they would get rid of Cleon for the future—which was what they rather expected—or, if they were wrong about this, they would have the Spartans in their power. (4.27-28)

LS: Ya, this is this famous story, and which ends, incredible as it sounds after that beginning, with a perfect victory of Cleon! Thucydides uses unusually strong terms of blame when he speaks of Cleon, and he uses the same language which Aristophanes in his comedies uses about Cleon: an irresponsible demagogue, one could say. And yet he proved right. We must consider this in a somewhat broader context. Cleon was a kind of madman. But madmen can be very successful; we have seen some striking examples in our own age. Now Cleon's successful madness foreshadows Alcibiades's madness: the Sicilian expedition was also a big gamble. But there are obvious differences: Cleon, as distinguished from Alcibiades, has no other base than Athens, so that in a real difficult emergency he cannot go to another city or to another country as Alcibiades could.

Now what is the difference between this Cleon–Nicias pair and Alcibiades–Nicias pair? Cleon is mad, Nicias is sensibility, *sôphrosynē* [σωφροσύνη], incarnate; there is no question, according to Thucydides's presentation. And yet whereas Nicias forces Cleon to become the leader of the expedition against Pylos, Alcibiades forces Nicias to become his fellow commander in Sicily. You see, the situation is very different. But precisely because Alcibiades is such a much greater general than Cleon and a much shrewder politician, Athens lost the Sicilian expedition. But according to what is implied here, Athens should have succeeded in Sicily. And that is precisely what Thucydides says. If the Athenians *demos* had not been so mad as to accuse Alcibiades on the basis of very unreliable and surely largely fabricated evidence to flee Athens and had left Alcibiades in command of the expedition, Athens might have won that war. It was a gamble. But most wars are gambles. I think we must later on, when we come to the Sicilian expedition, look back to what we have read now.

And now, how is the victory achieved after Nicias's landing—I'm sorry, after Cleon's landing? In the meantime, while they waited for Cleon's coming there was a wildfire on the island, and so all the hiding places of the Spartans became visible and one saw how *weak* that force was. And that was again an act of chance, again acting in favor of Athens. And the Spartans are simply defeated by the use, through Cleon, of light-armed soldiers, and the Spartans, heavily-armed hoplites, were unable to move quick[ly] enough to escape danger. And the whole account ends with another anecdote. I think we will read that and we will stop, in chapter 93. I'm sorry, 39. Well, we don't have to begin with the beginning.

Reader:
The Athenians and the Peloponnesians now each withdrew their main forces from Pylos and went home. Cleon had kept his promise, however mad he may have been to have made it. For, just as he had undertaken to do, he brought the men back within twenty days.

LS: No, is that 33?

Reader: Oh, I'm sorry, I was reading 39.

LS: Oh, that was my mistake.

Reader:
Though they drove back the light troops at any point where they ran in and approached too closely, they still fought back even in retreat, since they had no heavy equipment and could easily outdistance their pursuers over ground where, since the place had been uninhabited up till then, the going was rough and difficult and where the Spartans in their heavy armour could not press their pursuit.

LS: Ya. When he speaks of these other men, the light-armed soldiers, he calls them *anthrôpoi* [ἄνθρωποι], which means "human beings," and that is understood in contradistinction to *andres* [ἄνδρες], to "men," *hombres*, like the Spartan nobility. That will do. But go on.

Reader:
This fighting at long range—

With chapter 34?

LS: Ya.

Reader:
This fighting at long range continued for some time. In the end the Spartans were no longer able to counter-attack as quickly as before at the points where their line was threatened, and the light troops gained confidence from finding that their enemy was reacting more slowly to their attacks; they could see that they had many times the numbers of troops that the Spartans had and they had now become accustomed to the idea that these Spartans were not quite so terrible as they had thought, since their first experience of them had not been so dreadful as they had imagined it would be at the time when they had landed. Then they had been obsessed with the idea that they were actually going to attack Spartans, but now they began to despise their enemy, shouting as they charged down upon him in a mass and letting fly with stones and arrows and javelins and every weapon that came to hand. The Spartans were not used to this kind of fighting, and they were thrown into consternation by the shouting which accompanied the attacks; great clouds of dust rose from the ashes where the wood had been recently burned, and what with the arrows and stones loosed from so many hands and flying through the dust-cloud, it became impossible— (4.34)[v]

[v] The tape ends at this point.

Session 8: no date
Book 4, chapters 44-65

Leo Strauss: We are confronted with this question: Should we read Thucydides . . . by himself or should we view him historically with knowing as much as we can from all kinds of sources, including inscriptions about the political and military, economic and so on situation of Athens, and of course use for this purpose also what Thucydides himself tells us? Or should we try to use a formula which was originally applied to the Bible, to try to understand Thucydides through Thucydides? In practice, the question is a bit more complicated because we only have to think of the vocabulary which Thucydides uses and which cannot be completely cleared up out of Thucydides; we have to use dictionaries, grammars, and so on which are based on Greek literature as a whole. What's the matter?

Student: We can't hear you.

LS: So should I repeat these words of wisdom? [Laughter] Or . . . It makes sense to say, it is an alternative which confronts us right at the beginning: Should we try to understand Thucydides himself, out of himself, or should we try to understand him in the light of what we know or people know about Greece? And this question is inevitable and comes up in every so-called scholarly discussion, and in one way or another we have to face it. I believe it is more prudent to try to understand Thucydides by Thucydides. If I take and may take another example,[1] a more famous example: when people speak about Machiavelli, the word "Renaissance" is bound to turn up right away. But what do we know about the Renaissance? Mostly what we know through Machiavelli, and that means we explain something directly accessible, Machiavelli's text, by something which we know only through inference, which, I think, is not a sound procedure. And this is what I am *trying* to do, and not only I, regarding Thucydides's work.

Now let us see whether we can make this question a bit more specific. Is it clear enough in the general terms in which I stated it, or would you like to supplement it, correct it, and so on? It is a question which can lead very deep, but I have wisely stated it in the most obvious and simple form. And the question arises in every author: when you replace Thucydides by Shakespeare, you have the same difficulty, or whichever author you read. Is there a direct accessibility, a direct contact between the present age and the great minds of the past, or is such a direct contact in principle impossible? We had a visitor here some time ago, Mr. Gadamer,[i] a German professor, and he used this expression to make clear the difficulty: We have our horizon, our historical horizon [and], say, Plato had his historical horizon; these two horizons can never become identical and so to a great extent it is impossible to understand Plato as Plato understood himself. But what is possible and necessary is what he calls, with a somewhat far-fetched metaphor, a *melting* of horizons. Our horizon must be melted with Plato's, or vice versa. The same of course would apply to every other work by an author.

[i] Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), German philosopher, author of *Truth and Method* [*Wahrheit und Methode*] (1960). Friendly with Strauss since their common youthful studies with Martin Heidegger, and one of his most sympathetic interlocutors among the German thinkers of his generation.

But on the lower level, this was very common, say, two generations ago, when Charles Beard[ii] was at the peak of his fame, and either he or one of his teachers said: It's impossible to be *objective* as a historian. And he uses as an example the changing judgment, say, on Lincoln, during the Civil War, one generation after the Civil War, two generations, and so on. With the historical situation, the historical perspective, the historical horizon changes, and therefore the utmost one can do is to give the best account possible, the clearest . . . the most comprehensive account possible, given our premises. But beyond the premises we cannot go: then we come into the void. I suppose in one way or another, we are all familiar with this question, either from the literature or from your own experience, but such discussions can easily become very sterile and semantic, and the best way of . . . is just to go ahead and see what can be found. Yes?

Student: At the beginning, Thucydides says that men do not change, and that men of the succeeding generations may read his record for—

LS: Ya.

Same Student: This is an assumption that he makes.

LS: Yes.

Same Student: Without this assumption he would not have written the *Peloponnesian War*.

LS: Yes, all right, you can put it this way, but for him it was not an assumption. It was a verity.

Same Student: Yeah.

LS: And he—if you could prove it by looking at the past and see that the human beings of whom he know in the past were exactly the same kind of human beings he knows now, only the external is different, say, their military technique was inferior or was different, and other differences.

Same Student: Perhaps only if we make that same assumption, or if we see that as a fact, can we read Thucydides—only if we know that men do not change in their nature.

LS: Ya, but that is—all right, but there are other difficulties which come up even if you say that. Well, I may speak of it a little bit later if you don't mind. I will probably try leading in this direction. Yes?

Same Student: Well, it's somewhat strange. I think that at this college (this is not a direct answer to the question), but at this college, we are either—I think more than most other places—either obtuse to or free from this particular problem, because we simply do read the books starting from Homer, move past Nietzche, and we simply *assume* we can understand what they

[ii] Charles A. Beard (1874-1948), American historian and author of *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* (1913) and *Economic Basis of Politics* (1922). With his wife Mary R. Beard (1876-1958) he was a leading proponent of a "Progressive" or historicist and debunking view of the American political tradition.

are talking about. We assume . . . And I wonder if we are missing something by simply assuming that.

LS: Missing what?

Same Student: Well, missing being aware, actually missing the problem that I think you set forward with Thucydides.

LS: I mean, if I may coin a word which is . . . missing the dimension of history.

Student: Yeah, one could say that.

LS: Ya.

Same Student: I mean, obviously in many ways it's liberating.

LS: Ya.

Same Student: But perhaps it leads us to underestimate the difficulty of recapturing what . . . have said. I mean, that would be something more for you to comment on—in other words, I mean, is this really a serious problem? I know it is in most other places, but it doesn't seem to be a serious problem, or at least it's not—I mean, it certainly comes up once in a while, but it doesn't pose itself as a serious problem for the way most of the seminars . . . are carried on. We simply assume that we can understand, and we write in the catalogue that the great books talk to us more directly than many of our contemporaries, and so on and so forth.

LS: Ya . . . because of the extremely ephemeral character of . . . and there are—a newspaper article written a few days ago may be wholly unrelated, whereas a book written centuries ago may . . . But that is—let us begin at the beginning again.

Now the first word[iii] which everybody would say when they hear the name of Thucydides is that he was a "historian," because he wrote the *History*. Yes. I mean, this is a rather safe statement . . . what certain human beings did through one another and through daemonic things. . . . as truthfully as possible . . . especially . . . without adorning anything to make it grander than it was . . . But he does something more. He often gives the speeches of the characters, of his characters, in which he makes use of what seemed to *him*, to Thucydides, the right way of saying that. This is no longer any Spartan nor any Athenian . . . but there is something more: the arrangement. Think of the most beautiful example we have had: the funeral speech and the plague. These were two events . . . first the funeral speech, and then the plague. And yet there were more people killed in the Peloponnesian War. Why did he pick this one by Pericles? And his . . . sensitivity comes in, in one way or another. But one could still say the possibility remains to extract from that art and other Thucydidean additions. In other words, one could easily see that the funeral speech was only one among many . . . the most, simply the most important example . . . and other qualifications which Thucydides himself suggests. So we could

[iii] The quality of the audiofile is very poor starting at this point, and it is difficult to make out what Strauss is saying.

really think we can reach, by sufficient reflection on Thucydides's art, we could reach the naked truth. . . . have seen with their own eyes . . . human knowledge . . . But this is always incomplete. It needs a degree of supplementation, of unity. One could say: the unity . . . the required unity is in the facts, in our case in the Peloponnesian War, which has a beginning, and which has an end . . . But it is not the only war. It's one war among many. It's . . . an arbitrarily selected . . . in selecting the Peloponnesian War. But one could say it's the only war about which Thucydides could write as an eyewitness, or ear-witness, and above all, it is the most outstanding war, the grandest war, the peak of war, the *akmē* [ἀκμή]. It seems then that the basis is human knowledge. And the question which we have to consider is: Is there no alternative to this? Can there not be a different starting point than man . . . and as we have a reason to assume there always was and we always will. If you take Genesis, there is a chapter about the descendants of Cain, and there we find such remarks as, "This and this was the first man who built the . . ." The first man! Now when Herodotus speaks about such phenomena he makes an addition which you never find in Genesis: The first we *know of* who . . . " If we—the usual way of explaining . . . this difference between Herodotus and Genesis, and Herodotus and Thucydides they belong together, is that Genesis, that they used indiscriminately speeches proper based on highly . . . and myth, whereas Herodotus and Thucydides, Thucydides in different ways distinguished between myth, *mythos* and *logos*. Thucydides, in contradistinction to Herodotus, one can say is wholly unmythical. We have seen the example last time of Charybdis, when he mentions Charybdis, a story from the *Odyssey*, and he says that this is what people say, and the truth is that at that time the art of navigation was so poor that this was really a miracle to come through, whereas in Thucydides's own age, there was no question . . . but that one can reduce to a simple principle, otherwise one could not understand it, namely . . . they are always the same. But the Bible denies that. The Bible says: After God has created the world and man, everything was very good. Now there are no very good men in Thucydides, surely not in the biblical sense. There are extraordinary men and marvelous men, but none are good. You have to lower your standards considerably to find very good men in the biblical sense in Thucydides. Thucydides says: Men were always as they are now, a few good, most of them mediocre, and a considerable percentage of very poor fellows. And that was always so and will always will be so. And to add immediately that what he said at the beginning, "very good" colors the outlook of the whole Bible because there will be a final restoration into the original state. This is what is called the messianic age. So here we come to rock bottom, to the fundamental difference, the fundamental assumption of . . . which is not evidently necessary, as is shown by the existence of the Bible.

Now this is of course discussed today with great fervor. And most of you will have heard the term "demythologization." The notion being [that] myth is of course impossible anymore, but there is something in the Bible which is not mythical and which therefore can survive and must survive the demythologization. There is something in the Bible which [is] capable to live or to breathe without myth. The alternative view would be, and this shows that this is not . . . Can the Bible . . . find final expression only in mythical language, *mythicos*? For example, simplest . . . "God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." How will you state this unmythical[ly]? And what remains if we try to state it?

There was a controversy on this subject between the theologian who made, who put demythologization on the map, Bultmann, and a philosopher called Jaspers about this subject,[iv] in which the issue was this, exactly this: Is a demythologization possible? Jaspers said "no," and on the premise that the Bible—and he understood by the Bible of course the Christian Bible—is as mythical as, say, Buddhism or any other kind of religion. And Bultmann, who was a Christian theologian, could of course never admit that myth and faith have the same status. Be this as it may, this I believe is a question of which we today cannot help thinking when studying Thucydides.

There was a great Roman historian, Tacitus, a man who knew in a very strange way both Judaism and Christianity and said rather atrocious things about them, unintelligible, one can say . . . But Tacitus has one of his characters say, "There will be vices as long as there will be human beings." That is a statement of the issue between not only Tacitus but the Greek Thucydides . . . and divine. The Bible somehow assumes that there will be a time when there will be no more vices. Now this much as a reminder of the question against which there will be . . . sooner or later—or all the time. And I would like to say a few words about our discussion of last time, but not before I have found out whether you would like to continue this, the discussion to which I referred.Yes?

Student: In Herodotus at least, if not in Thucydides himself, in part Herodotus seems to make the claim that "I was talking about things which have happened."

LS: Ya, sure.

Same Student: And then it seems as though he is in fact talking about myth. And I still have a hard time understanding—perhaps his myths are the some of the most fascinating.

LS: I'm sorry?

Same Student: Are some of the most fascinating things in Herodotus. But I still have a hard time understanding how one is supposed to read the two together and just how far you should be willing to go when you suspect that he's talking about myths and not things that happened.

LS: Ya, in the first place you have to see whether he says, "This happened," or he says, "It is said to have happened." And then you have to see: Can you get a unitary picture from that? If not, you have to look deeper. Shouldn't Thucydides—Herodotus does not have that peculiar sobriety which Thucydides has, and he doesn't claim to have it, that's clear. That doesn't of course prove that he was under the *spell* of the myth. That must be investigated; it's a very long question. In a way, the key to it is the story of Gyges in the first book of Herodotus. Have you heard of that? That men regarded as the greatest crime to show what they regarded as the most beautiful and as of their own—the simplest example is their wives—in its nakedness to others.[v] And that means . . . the sacredness of one's own tradition is sacrosanct, is sacred, and cannot be questioned. But there are signs of the fact that Herodotus does question the sacred Greek things.

[iv] See Karl Jaspers and Rudolf Bultmann, *Myth & Christianity: An Inquiry into the Possibility of Religion without Myth* (New York: Noonday Press, 1958).
[v] Herodotus, *History* 1.8-10.

So Herodotus seems to have made a kind of compromise between what he regarded as the truth and what he regarded as the Greek, as the Greek beauty, the Greek venerable, beautiful tradition, and whether he sided with the truth against the Greek venerable tradition, that is the question. And then one has to find out: if he sided with the truth against the venerable tradition, why did he do that? That cannot be avoided. It is much more difficult in Thucydides. In Thucydides the question doesn't arise, because all these mythical stories are tacitly dismissed by the formula that is set: That's what people say. But still, compared with the Bible, Thucydides and Herodotus belong together: there is no first man[2] [but] only the first man *we know of*. This is absolutely crucial and one must also not forget such a thing as right at the beginning, near the beginning where it is said that the Persians are taught to say the truth, which . . . to think the truth . . .[vi] And this creates a prejudice in favor of the Persian stories. Now Persia is otherwise not very respectable, you know their mad king Cambyses, who killed the bull Apis, whom the Egyptians regarded as a god, and Cambyses shows by his action that he is just a plain fool. . . . Cambyses was in the right, and yet he was a madman, as as Herodotus says he was: one just doesn't do this kind of thing.[vii] So one must make a distinction between the truth and let us say the respectable or venerable, which is not necessarily true. You must also not forget that it is Herodotus who says that it was Homer and Hesiod who made the Greek their gods.[viii] In other words, Homer and Hesiod did not tell stories which had come down to them from their ancestors, but they *made* these stories. There are many more . . . Herodotus is much more complicated than Thucydides, and yet they are, compared with the Bible, very closely akin. Yes?

Student: Thucydides's concern with the future, for the time to come, there is much insistence on the future as a time.

LS: Ya.

Same Student: Is this consciousness of the future present in Herodotus?

LS: Not that I know. I mean, there will be a future, there will be human beings, and similar things will happen with them.

Same Student: But this explicit address to the future, it's in Thucydides in a special way.

LS: Ya, but it what way is it in Thucydides?

Same Student: I think it's there in two ways. The first is the integrity of work, which must survive in order to be read. That he has, he has to believe it. And the second is that as a consequence of the things we talked about earlier that men will be able to learn something . . .

LS: Ya, but what way . . . ? Ya, but that is a difficult point—what does it mean to learn something?

[vi] Herodotus, *History* 1.138.
[vii] Herodotus, *History* 3.29, 37-38.
[viii] Herodotus, *History* 2.53.

Same Student: That they will recognize themselves in the patterns that he has shown, and that he has to—Thucydides realizes he has to make these patterns in some way intelligible, to sort things and arrange things to some degree to preserve their future intelligibility.

LS: I don't know whether one can say it in this form. Does he not rather say that he has made intelligible all future events? . . . detail that this man has this particular name and comes from a family, that of course not. But war, and what counts in war, peace, what counts in peace and this kind of thing, and that there will always be war and there will always be periods of peace, though generally speaking longer periods of peace than longer periods of war. The other would be unnatural, because there would not be sufficient men to fight. And that, the crucial importance of moderation, and not to be . . . by misfortune and good fortune this kind of thing, also referring to the more specific things probably, like the techniques of naval and land warfare and so on. And the enormous importance of the difference of the rich and the poor and what this can do to the cities, all this kind of thing. If one knows these things, one will never—and has understood them—one will no longer be surprised about the general course of events, although one can naturally be surprised about the turn events take at a given time. The fact that there should be an individual like Brasidas in Sparta was an absolute surprise. It was not foreseen by anyone, and yet such things happen, surprisingly, in surprising places, but this is again a general truth, a general insight. Should we then turn to—or maybe you want to make a comment?

Student: Mr. Strauss, in the myth of Gyges, what happens to the man who sees Gyges's wife naked? Does he, I've forgotten, does he—?

LS: He marries her, he kills the husband.

Same Student: Gyges is the one who sees?

LS: He kills the husband, and he becomes the king.

Student: But in the fifth generation, somebody suffers the punishment for it.

LS: I beg your pardon?

Same Student: In the fifth generation someone suffers the punishment for this. . . .[ix]

LS: Ya. But still, he sees a naked woman, which is the immediate point. Yes?

Mrs. Kaplan: . . .

LS: Put it into what?

Mrs. Kaplan: Quotation marks.

LS: Yes.

[ix] Herodotus, *History* 1.13.

Mrs. Kaplan: Now the general tone . . . and the contents . . . this war . . . whether we have them or do not . . . I don't know whether the translation . . . [x]

LS: There is another problem. Whenever he describes the battle and people are killed, and he makes a lot of fuss of what is done with the corpses: the defeated people have to come cap in hand and ask for the corpses, for their own corpses [so] that they can be buried, and that is granted. And well, there is not of the slightest military importance, but the economic things . . . are of crucial . . . and of the economic things he says almost nothing. Why? I would say from the point of the view of the actors, in this case the Greeks, the burial of the dead, the decent burial of the dead is something of the highest and grandest importance, whereas the provision of food, timber, or what have you, is indeed very urgent but just needs more . . . and does not belong to the highest . . . Therefore one doesn't have to consider.

Now one can go from there and apply this to the speeches, that for the simple reader of Thucydides, Greek or English, the speeches are much more arresting and impressive than the narrative. I think that can easily be granted. But is this Thucydides's doing? Is not speech as speech more grand than deed of war or battle? It's a very noisy affair, and very audible, and yet it lacks the beauty which a speech, even a speech by Cleon, can have. So it is perfectly natural that the speeches should be more impressive than the narrative, which of course implies in this latter case a deception: the prosaic narrative may put the splendid speech into its proper perspective and would bring it—and make it better intelligible. I do not know whether that is an answer to your question.

Mrs. Kaplan: But, yes, I believe. What I wanted to say probably . . . Nevertheless, if the speech . . . But they are very reasonable. In this way, I want to say they are reasoning all the time. You don't feel the speaker, the person, because there is no—in whole speeches there is more logical . . . false step, you may agree, you may not agree, you may have sympathies to this person speaking or you may not, but you will see that they are very logical, very reasonable. Now this is Thucydides, they are not difficult to understand, that they are all people that are speaking. So when I say, when I want to read about these people and know about them a little bit more from a different aspect, that's not my goal. I don't say that . . .

LS: But we don't have any other speeches. Maybe there is another tradition which can be recovered to some extent from later historians, but that is nothing compared withThucydides. And even if this were completely accessible, it would only lead, I believe, to the same result, that we would prefer the Thucydidean speeches.

Student: Yeah, I wonder if I could ask Mrs. Kaplan if this is what she meant, although it's a powerful way to put it, it's the way it's put. Were you suggesting that what they now call the psychological dimension is somewhat missing?

Mrs. Kaplan: Not at all.

Same Student: No?

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[x] The speaker's comment is lengthy but few words are intelligible. White noise drowns out much of the comment, which is cut off by a break in the tape or a change of tape.

Mrs. Kaplan: Not at all. By no means. . . . if you want to feel . . .

Same Student: Well, the first one, first one.

Mrs. Kaplan: . . . He is reasonable, extremely moderate, extremely, how to say, sage . . . wise man, he is wise. And therefore everybody speaks a little bit with touch of wise . . .

Same Student: Could we put the question then this way: Is there not a certain distortion in the direction of making everything seem, or making the character seem to be more reasonable than what one expected . . .

LS: Ya, but that's what he says. When he speaks about the speeches, he says he will show what would be, what was the right thing, what was the right thing to say for him in the circumstances. Is this the point you wanted to make? I mean, that is what he speaks about the speeches in chapter 22 and 23, that's exactly what he says. I mean, I do not know the wording anymore.

Same Student: Yeah, yeah. Yes. But then the question is: Is that a kind of distortion of the facts, of the events?

LS: But if they were not good in this sense, good speeches, he wouldn't have picked them. He wouldn't, you see? Let me—one can use a general . . . There is a speech of Thucydides, and that is of course the whole work, and this speech is complete, dealing with the whole war from both sides of the conflict. And then on the other hand, there are what we call now the narrower kind of speeches: there are Pericles, Cleon, and so on. They are partial speeches, dealing with a special situation, say, the outbreak of the war, the capture of the Spartans in Pylos, or whatever it is, from a partial point of view: Athenian, Spartan, or whatever it may be. And one has to balance this twofold speech in order to get the proper judgment (a) about the invidual speech of the character and (b) about Thucydides's own impartial comparative speech. But what was it . . .

Student: You think that in the speeches, the character, the individual character is diluted by Thucydides, it is not manifested, because—

LS: Is not?

Same Student: Is not manifested in the speeches because, as she says, they are all so reasonable. The ghostwriter, the ghostwriter is Thucydides.

LS: Ya, but they *are*. I mean, they come out—in the discussion last time, this example of the Spartans, the warning to be deceived by good luck; and that the victory of the Athenians at Pylos, that was just a piece of good luck, don't trust it. And in the same speech, they equate surreptitiously—it was a victory due not merely to chance. Now this shows there is something fishy about the Spartans. That surfaces later in other speeches. And Diodotus's speech when he is trying saving the Mytilenaeans says that there was a time when there was no real punishment, no corporeal punishment, and everything was fine, and then people introduced punishment and then there came a redundancy of punishment of which we saw a lot. And so there is—and

Diodotus says, "When you address the Athenian people, don't believe you can say the truth." The speeches have their individual characters. What you can say is only this, and this is not, this is, of course . . . from the standpoint of modern realism, that he does not imitate the peculiarities of speech, say, Alcibiades's lisping or whatever it is, and therefore use—Thucydides uses in all the speeches the highest arts of rhetoric as developed by the greatest rhetoricians.

If you want to have a beautiful presentation of this problem that is the best I've ever read, you should read Hippolyte Taine's *Essai sur Tite Live*, "Essay on Livy" . . . and where he shows that the ancient Romans of Romulus's time and the most modern Romans at the end of the Republic use exactly the same rhetorical devices: all particularity, all individuality has gone. And this is a great defect from the modern point of view, because then every speaker should be presented in *his* way of speaking. But one should read Taine's argument, because it's a beautiful statement, but that is parable. Thucydides makes most of his speakers, and therefore he uses the greatest art in each case when he elaborates his speeches. But their meanness, at least the meanness of the mean people, shines through nevertheless, just like the grandeur of the grand also shines through. Ya. Well, surely one must think about that.

Let us now turn again at the discussion of last time, first . . . We have seen there the most striking thing was Diodotus's speech against Cleon, the reference to Hesiod, the quotation from Homer, and last but not least, Demosthenes, the victor—no, as a matter of fact, the man defeated in central Greece. Here we seem to find the alternative to that increase, to that progress which Thucydides presented in his *Archaelogy* and to which Pericles alluded in the funeral speech. Somehow this is implicit also in Cleon, but only implicit. But the most important passage in this respect, which I forgot to refer to last time, occurs in book 1. And if you look it up in your edition, page 24, paragraph 1 end, I believe that's the only passage where Thucydides speaks about these two conflicting views of the past. Do you have it?

Reader:
"We may claim instead to have used only the plainest evidence and to have reached conclusions which are reasonably accurate, considering that we have been dealing with ancient history. As for this present war, even though people are apt to think that the war in which they are fighting is the greatest of all wars, and when it is over, to relapse again into their admiration of the past, nevertheless, if one looks at the facts themselves, one will see that this was the greatest war of all."

LS: All right. So you see here Thucydides states the principle: why people have such two different postures towards the past. In peacetime, they admire the past; in wartime, they admire the present. And so these are not accidental features, that there are pessimistic and optimistic generations, but that is deeply ingrained in man, that the war, which makes these enormous demands on each, is regarded—the present war, that is *the* war. But in peacetime the loyalties to the ancestral tradition assert themselves, and then the present is only an appendix to a much greater past. So this is the way in which Thucydides seems to have explained to himself this remarkable difficulty. And there is another point which we noted, and [3][to which] Thucydides alluded already in his eulogy of Pericles: the post-Periclean conflict between the private good and the common good. In Pericles, there was perfect harmony between the two. What Pericles

wanted for himself, as his good, was good for Athens, and that was no longer the case as far as his successors were concerned. That we know.

And now we enter the story of Demosthenes, and we have learned that this concern with the private good, this disruptive, divisive concern with the private good was due not merely to base ambition but to sensible fear of mad men, the *demos*. And you remember that Demosthenes returned to Athens only after his splendid victory in the following spring, not without fear that he might be impeached, but with less fear because he had at least made some restitution. One can say that Demosthenes here foreshadows Nicias's conduct in Sicily. Nicias and Demosthenes were colleagues in Sicily, and Nicias was very much afraid of what the Athenians would do to him if he were to come back without having defeated the Sicilians. So by the way, Sicily always comes up without any apparent necessity. That is deliberately done. Sicily is always there as background, something which elicits actions which seem to be related only to mainland Greece, especially Central Greece.

Now in the fourth book we have seen the splendid victory of the Athenians at Pylos. The initiative was Demosthenes's. You remember that unforgettable scene, when he gives no command, waits until the soldiers get sufficiently bored to bring up the building that they—to build a fort. And then it was that the Athenians have landed on Spartan soil, something which no one could have ever expected to begin with, but that doesn't mean that it's against human nature or that it is against the nature of war; on the contrary, surprises happen. And this was Demosthenes's initiative, but the success was decisively due, we are sorry to say, to Cleon, to his *madness*. Nicias and the other sane men, the opposite of madness, mad men, *mainomenoi* [μαινόμενοι], the *sôphrones* [σώφρονες], the sober men, they said: "That's wonderful. Let him go home; either he really defeats the Spartans, fine, or he is defeated and killed, still better." But these clever moderate people are themselves defeated, because Cleon comes back and his reputation is higher than it ever was. He makes good his mad promises. They force Nicias, the sober man, [they] force the sober Nicias to abandon his command to the mad man Cleon. This has also a parallel later on Sicily, where Alcibiades, whom one can hardly call a madman but whom one also cannot call a moderate man, Alcibiades forces the sober Nicias to share his command with him, and this leads to entirely different results. In this Kleinias–Nicias debate, where Kleinias wins, just as he wins later on the battlefield—oh, sorry, Cleon. . . . In the Cleon–Nicias debate, in which Cleon wins, as he later wins on the battlefield, it seems that moderation is superior to madness when you read Thucydides superficially. Ya? But when you look at the result, at least as a result as it has come to sight up to now, madness proves to be superior to moderation. Does this ring a bell, that madness may be superior to moderation? I am sure that some of you who have read Plato's *Phaedrus*. It begins with the praise of moderation by a rather inferior speaker, and then what comes later is retraction in favor of divine madness against calculating low moderation. The thought was not wholly unfamiliar to Thucydides. So this I thought I should mention before we go on.

Let us see. I believe we came last time, if I am not mistaken, up to chapter 41, or is this an error? Now let us then perhaps continue there. 44, paragraph 5 to 6. That has to do with the battle between the Athenians and the Corinthians.

Reader:

The Athenians, finding that the enemy was no longer offering battle, took up their dead, stripped the bodies of the enemy dead, and immediately put up a trophy. Meanwhile the half of the Corinthian army stationed at Cenchriae to guard against the Athenians sailing against Crommyon could not get a clear view of the battle because of Mount Oneion, but they saw the dust rising and, realizing what was happening, came to the relief at once. So also did the older men from the city of Corinth when they found out what the situation was.

The Athenians, seeing all these forces moving up against them, thought that they were reinforcements coming from the neighboring Peloponnesian states, and quickly retreated to their ships, taking with them the spoils of battle and their own dead except for two, whose bodies they could not find and which were left on the field. Going on board the ships, they crossed over to the islands lying off the coast and from there sent a herald back and recovered under a truce the bodies which they had left behind. Two hundred— (4.44)

LS: That's all we need. It so happens that this particular incident is mentioned in Nicias's biography.[xi] And it was Nicias, who was the highest . . . the noble gentleman Nicias, who didn't wish to leave the two corpses unburied. Why Thucydides doesn't mention that this was Nicias's doing, that's an interesting question, but we cannot answer it. But he surely didn't do it. That is grist for Mrs. Kaplan's mill, but we do not know it in what ways, why Thucydides selects and does not select. Yes.

Now from this story of the battle near Corinth, there is a natural transition to Corcyra. You remember Corcyra from this conflict at the very beginning, in chapter 24, here it begins in chapter 46. The Corcyraeans seek protection against Corcyraean *demos* by surrendering to the Athenian *demos*. So they think if they surrender to the Athenian *demos*, they will defend them against the rich people of Corcyra. That is in chapter 46, 47. It's another victory of the private over the common, the private good of the *demos* over the common good of the city of Corcyra, because the common private good—the good of the part is always private compared to the common good. What follows next, an Athenian success on the island of Cythera, under Nicias by the way, and Cythera is an island south of the Peloponnese. And after Pylos and the success on Cythera, of course there is a decline of Spartan confidence. Let us see in chapter 55, paragaph 2 to 4. Do you have that? About the middle of chapter 55.

Reader:
What they feared was that there might be a revolution against the government after the great and unexpected disaster at Sphacteria, with Pylos and Cythera now in enemy hands, and committed as they were on every side to a form of warfare where mobility was what counted and where attacks were difficult to guard against. Thus they raised a force of 400 cavalry and a force of archers—something quite at variance with their normal way of doing things—and in fact they now became more than ever irresolute in their military conduct; they were faced with something outside the scope of their existing organization, namely a war fought on the seas and fought

[xi] Strauss refers to Plutarch's *Life of Nicias* 6.5-6.

against Athenians—people who thought that every moment when they were not attacking was so much sacrificed from their expectation of achievement. Then, too, they were very greatly disheartened by the many unpredictable blows of fortune which had fallen upon them in such a short time, and they were constantly afraid that some other disaster might overtake them like the one at Sphacteria. For this reason they lacked confidence when they went into battle; they had had no previous experience of misfortune, and so their morale collapsed and they thought that whatever step they took would prove to be a mistake. (4.55)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. So that is a great, an enormous change, but in a way a return to Spartan caution but now reinforced by this loss of *tyche* [τύχη]. Athens, the Athenians and *tyche* [τύχη] together, that is too much for Sparta. Yes.

Now then he turns, after finishing this narrative he turns immediately to Sicily. There is an armistice. In Sicily there is of course also war between the various Sicilian cities, but an armistice is brought about through the merits of a Sicilian statesman called Hermocrates. And there is a pan-Sicilian assembly in a Sicilian town called Gela, and Hermocrates makes there a speech, chapter 59, following. We cannot read the whole speech, unfortunately. Now let us see, at the beginning of chapter 60. Ya?

Reader:
"Yet, if we are sensible, we should realize that this conference is not simply concerned with the private interests of each state; we have also to consider whether we can still preserve the existence of Sicily as a whole. It is now, as I see it, being threatened by Athens, and we ought to regard the Athenians as much more forcible arguments for peace than any words that can be spoken by me. They are the greatest power in Hellas, and here they are among us with a few ships, watching for us to make mistakes, and, though by nature we must be their enemies, they are, under the cover of a legal alliance, trying to arrange matters to suit themselves. Now if we fight among ourselves and call in the help of the Athenians, who are only too willing to join in whether they are called for or not; if we then proceed to use our own resources in weakening ourselves, thus doing the preliminary work for their future empire, the likely thing to happen is that, when they see us exhausted, they will come here one day with larger forces and will attempt to bring all of us under their control."

LS: Yes. Go on.

Reader:
"Yet, if we are sensible, our aim in calling in allies and running additional risks should be to win for ourselves something that does not belong to us rather than to ruin what we have already. We should realize that internal strife is the main reason for the decline of cities, and will be so for Sicily too, if we, the inhabitants, who are all threatened together, still stand apart from each other, city against city. Having grasped this point, we should make friends, man with man and city with city, and should set out on a united effort to save Sicily as a whole. No one should have the idea that while the Dorians among us are enemies to the Athenians, the Chalcidians are quite safe because of their Ionian blood.'"

LS: In other words, there are two racial strains in Sicily, the Ionians and the Dorians. And the Ionians are racially akin to the Athenians, and Dorians are racially akin to the Spartans, of course. Do not believe that this racial division in Sicily is of any relevance compared to the unity of Sicily as a whole. That is the point which he makes. Go on.

Reader:
"Athenian intervention has nothing to do with the races into which we are divided. They are not attacking us because—"

LS: Ya, "divided"—ya, well, but "by nature divided," *dicha pephyke* [δίχα πέφυκε]. In other words, by nature Sicily consists of *two* powers but it must regard itself as a single one, as a single country. Yes?

Reader:
"they are not attacking us because they hate one or the other; what they want is the good things of Sicily which are the common property of us all. They made this quite clear recently by the way in which they received the invitation of the Chalcidians. The Chalcidians had never once sent any help to Athens according to their treaty with her; but Athens went out of her way zealously to provide even more than the treaty bound her to do. Now it is perfectly understandable that the Athenians should have these ambitions and should be making their plans accordingly. I am not blaming those who are resolved to rule, only those who show an even greater readiness to submit. For men in general it is always just as natural to take control when there is no resistance as to stand out against aggression. And we are making a great mistake if, knowing all this, we fail to take our precautions, or if we have come here on the assumption that we have anything more important to do than to join forces in dealing with the danger that threatens us all. We could quickly be rid of it, if we would agree among ourselves, since the Athenians are not attacking us from bases in their own country, but only from bases in the country of those states here who have called them in. So instead of war following upon war, our differences are quietly settled in peace; and as for those who were called in from outside, they came here with what looked like a good excuse for their evil ends, but they will now have a really good reason to go away without having attained them." (4.61)

LS: Now what is it: Do the Athenians act justly or unjustly in trying to subjugate Sicily? It is natural for the human beings to rule and to extend its rule whenever feasible, and yet it can be done somehow decently or indecently. And the Athenians apparently—Hemocrates can't make up his mind whether they, the Athenians, simply follow human nature or whether they act indecently. And there is another question: What kind of a man is Hemocrates? That he was great as a general is made clear enough. Now a little bit later in chapter 64, ya, chapter—in about the middle of chapter 64.

Reader:
"There is nothing to be ashamed of in making concessions to one's own people, a Dorian to a Dorian or a Chalcidian to another of his own race, and, taken all together, we are all of us neighbours, living together in the same country, in the midst of the sea, all called by the same name of Sicilians."

LS: By one *name*: the name is one, not the *physis* [φύσις], not the nature. And this common name and of course the common interest, that should help them to overcome their division, which is so useful for the Athenians. Ya, this is more or less the end of Hermocrates's speech. Let us read the next chapter.

Reader: 65?

LS: Ya.

Reader:
The Sicilians took his advice and agreed among themselves to end the war, each state keeping what it had already, except that the people of Camarina were to have Morgantina on payment of a fixed sum of money to Syracuse. Those who were allies of the Athenians summoned the Athenian commanders and told them that they were going to make peace and that the treaty would apply also to the Athenians. Peace was then made, with the approval of the Athenian commanders, and afterwards the Athenian fleet sailed away from Sicily. However, when they arrived home the Athenians in Athens banished two of the generals, Pythodorus and Sophocles, and fined the third, Eurymedon, on the grounds that they had been bribed to leave Sicily when it was in their power to have taken control of the island. Such was the effect on the Athenians of their present good fortune that they thought that nothing could go wrong with them; that the possible and the difficult were alike attainable, whether the forces employed were large or wholly inadequate. It was their surprising success in most directions which caused this state of mind and suggested to them that their strength was equal with their hopes. (4.65)

LS: This remark at the end especially corresponds to what he had said about the Spartans in chapter 55, paragraph 4. You know, the Athenians now favored by chance are full of hope; the Spartans *dis*favored by chance, closer to despair. That is the situation which has been reached at this point. Ya.

And now I think we must stop here and come next time to the story of Megara and of Delion. Delion was a terrific Athenian defeat, a wholly unexpected Athenian defeat. We know very little about it apart from Thucydides's account, except that Socrates was present, at least according to the *Laches*, to Plato's dialogue *Laches*.[xii] But nowhere else is that mentioned. Of course one doesn't know how good the memory of Laches was, and as for—I mean, these reports about Socrates's military activity are all in need of a critical revision, because both Plato and Xenophon, who are naturally our chief sources about Socrates, they are very eager to represent Socrates as a model citizen and therefore also as a model soldier. The strange thing is that the only of these two great writers who was himself a military man, Xenophon, doesn't say a word about these things. He speaks only of Socrates's *justice* as shown in war, which could of course mean that he wasn't AWOL. It does not necessarily mean war. That's a dire question. And the Greeks were always famous as crafty liars from the days of Odysseus on. How far—[xiii]

[xii] Plato, *Laches* 181b.
[xiii] The tape ends at this point.

Session 9: no date
Book 4, chapters 74-end; book 5, chapters 1-16

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —the sole student, Miss Fairfax, and she was breathing all the time and my medical knowledge was zero, and so I thought that it was obviously a very advanced stage of tuberculosis and expected that she would expire in one of my classes. And then later on I learned that it was just asthma, which is very fear-inspiring but not necessarily fatal. And that's my . . . So in case I show signs of that, I have to ask for your forgiveness.

Now we are in the fourth book of Thucydides, and I will say a few words connecting what we discussed last time with what we discussed before. I begin again with a very simple question which is absolutely necessary to raise, I believe, and which in more or less superficial or wrong form is raised by everyone who reads Thucydides: Why Thucydides? Ultimately the answer will be: in order to understand ourselves. Because what is Hecuba,[i] what is the Peloponnesian War to us, and even Pericles to us? In order to understand ourselves in the most comprehensive, in the simply comprehensive manner, we study Thucydides; and not only that, in order to understand things, as someone called it, *sub specie aeternitatis*, "from the point of view of eternity," of the things which never pass away.

Now this quest, which was traditionally called philosophy, is now in our time questioned in the name of history. And Thucydides is somehow the father of history, the title habitually given to Herodotus but perhaps with greater right to—at least with no lesser right—to Thucydides. History seems to have made philosophy questionable. That is of course not always said, but it is in most cases implied. And those of you who have ever been so fortunate or unfortunate to study social science will bear me out, that this is what happened there, that the place of philosophy is taken by history—and it doesn't have to call itself history, it may call itself anthropology or what not, but it is in fact history, culture . . . But still, could one not say that, in spite of this great change, that philosophy has retained somehow its hold? Philosophy is not indeed no longer study of things from the point of view of eternity. But is it not still study of all things from the point of view of the most universal? This most universal may no longer be eternal, but more comprehensive than that of any so-called special science. Still, it remains a question whether this does not constitute a refutation of philosophy by history. But was history originally the alternative to philosophy? Thucydides's history may be *incomplete* philosophy, and that can be shown without too great difficulty. The broadest both philosophic, political–philosophic question raised by Thucydides or mentioned by Thucydides is: What was the best regime in Athens in his lifetime? And that was a regime which lasted a few months toward the end of the war. Now you cannot raise the question, What is the best regime for a given city at a given time? without at least squinting at the question: What is the best regime simply?

The second point. When you look at the broadest notions which Thucydides suggests, you arrive at those of motion and rest. Now motion and rest are surely constituents of everything we know, that we have seen, but are they the only ones, are they the only ones of this order? That can very well be doubted. And that again will show a sign of the incompleteness of Thucydides as a philosopher. But precisely for this reason he belongs to the side of philosophy, because an

[i] *Hamlet*, act 2, scene 2.

incomplete philosophy is still philosophy. The original alternative to philosophy was not history but something which we have come across in this course on more than one occasion: *nomos*, "the law," in the comprehensive sense, the whole order of life in every respect of a given community. And the community is primarily the nation, the *ethnos* [ἔθνος], and [it] became in Greece under certain conditions the *polis* [πόλις]. But the *polis* is, one can say, a more refined version of the *ethnos* [ἔθνος], but still, they're the same. So there are many nations, many *ethnē* [ἔθνη] , many *nomoi* [νόμοι]: that is the situation which we find everywhere we look. They seem to live side by side without any conflict among them. For example, two people of different tribes who never met before would have some ways of exchanging thoughts, say: Well, this is what you do to your dead; you bury them. We cremate them. That is your way, this is our way. No conflict, because it applies to different tribes. One of the most interesting passages about this subject occurs in the Pentateuch, which I would like to read to you, although you surely know it, in Deuteronomy, chapter 4, verse 19, a speech of God to Israel.

"And when you look up to the sky and behold the sun, the moon and the stars, the whole heavenly host, you must not be lured into bowing down to them or serving them. These the Lord your God has allotted to the other peoples everywhere under heaven; but you the Lord took and brought out of Egypt, that iron blast furnace, to be His very own people, as is now the case."

So in other words, even under the premise of the biblical God and the strict prohibition against all false foreign worship or idolatry, even then a kind of side-by-side, a kind of *tolerance* in this sense seems to be admitted. Now we see from this passage, as well as from many others in Thucydides too, that the laws demand the support beyond the laws, and that can only be gods or beings akin to the gods, called demons or children of gods, or whatever they may be. There is also a great and infinite variety regarding the gods. That is the original situation of men behind which we cannot well go back except by more or less hypothetical speculations.

Now let us then turn to Thucydides. Where does Thucydides stand? And postponing the question of the Greeks in general, because the Greeks of course had as much gods and different laws as other nations. But what strikes one in reading Thucydides is that he . . . everywhere with the things that are, according to the opinion of everyone: Jew, or Greek, or Egyptian, but [with] very different views of what is law and what is god would all agree that there are sun, moon, stars, wolves, dogs, and so on. I referred to you, I believe, on a former occasion to the way in which Herodotus on one hand, and the Bible on the other speak of the first inventors, that the Bible says the first people living in tents or something of this kind, and Herodotus would always add: "the first we *know of* who lived in tents." In other words . . . that one must be *critical*, as it would be called in later ages, something which does not in this form exist in the biblical horizon. So that the beings which are, and the gods are not among them, in Thucydides. To state it as harshly as possible: there is no shred of evidence for gods. But there is a lot of evidence, according to Thucydides, for the *need* for gods. But there is no confusion, no darkness in Thucydides's mind caused by the possibility of gods. After all, Thucydides could be someone which is sometimes called in modern times an agnostic. Which is, maybe the Ethiopians, maybe the[1] [Scyths] are right about what they say about the gods. That's excluded by his principle, what we think they are . . . to call that empiricism is a misleading expression because that is a modern scientific doctrine based on modern science with which Thucydides has very little to do.

So I said we must start from a situation in which there is a variety of laws, *nomoi*, a variety of laws; but that doesn't necessarily mean conflict, it could be side by side. But as I indicated by the example of the burial rights, that is not so. There may be difference of opinion whether one should marry one's second cousin or should not, but not regarding burial, not regarding worship or respecting parents—although there are differences there, whether one respects them more by eating them when they are too old to work, or by waiting respectfully until they are taken away. But burial is a good example, borne out by classical passages, human sacrifice is an eminent, important example, and last but not least, incest. Where is the line separating incest from nonincest? So there is, then, when we look at the highest example, a conflict and not a mere side-by-side between the various *nomoi*. And from this conflict there arises the quest for *the* law, for *the* nomos, for the divine *nomos*, the highest *nomos*. In the simplest or clearest case, the sole *nomos*, given by the sole unique god, the only god who antedates this *nomos* and may very well outlast it, so that we come into a dimension beyond the *nomos*: God himself. Whether men can know anything or much about it is another question.

Then from this point of view, the alternatives are all idolatrous: nice, attractive, ugly . . . but they have no standing whatever. And that is of course biblical, especially [from the] Old Testament point of view, in various ways modified in the New Testament. As the Bible says, the right life is to love God with all one's soul, with all one's heart and with all one's might.[ii] Absolute subjection to what's written: to obey God's commands, the law, makes man a truly human being. The consequence of this, the consequence not always drawn and surely in our extremely tolerant age overlooked, is that if this is so, there is no place for philosophy.

I am old enough for once to quote myself. In a book which I published many years ago called *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, I spoke about Judaism and this problem, because in Christianity the situation is very different. Spinoza said that the Jews despise philosophy. Period. And he knew something of philosophy and of Judaism. The issue of traditional Judaism versus philosophy is identical with the issue of Jerusalem versus Athens. It is difficult not to see the connection between the depreciation of the primary object of philosophy, the heavens and the heavenly bodies—if you think [of] what Aristotle says about them, it is difficult not to see the connection between the depreciation of the primary objects of philosophy in the first chapter of Genesis and the prohibition against eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the second chapter, because the knowledge of good and evil is that knowledge for the sake of which we seek knowledge, and we are not interested primarily in . . . however useful, because usefulness is the goodness, and then knowledge of good and evil. The divine name in Exodus, "I shall be what I shall be," not what I am[iii]—the admonition that the law in not in heaven or beyond the sea,[iv] the saying of the Prophet Micah, about what the Lord requires of man[v] in such Talmudic utterances as this, quote: "For him who reflects about four things: about what is above, what is below, what is before, what is behind, it would be better not to have come into the

[ii] Deuteronomy 6.5; repeated by Jesus in all three Synoptic Gospels.
[iii] Exodus 3.14.
[iv] Deuteronomy 30.11-14.
[v] Micah 6:8.

world,[vi] and God owns nothing in His world except the four cubitts of the law.[vii]"[viii] We study the law and perform it. . . . You usually know Christian parallels to that, but in all the . . . that is particularly noticeable.

There is no, strictly speaking—in Christianity very early people began to speak, the Church Fathers [began to speak] of the *philosophia Christi*, of "the philosophy of Christ." There is no *philosophia Mosis*, or "philosophy of Moses." All kinds of compromises were made, naturally, in a tradition of millennia everything is possible. But the question is: What is characteristic and what is essential, the core, and what is not? Needless to say, there are entirely different things in Judaism, there is especially Jewish mysticism of which I know nothing first hand, but there is a very great student of that living in our age, Scholem,[ix] who has given me some notion, which played an enormous role, and that is something, a hybrid, at least in the way which it looks to me, between Judaism and philosophy. I know that there are many people, there are books written about the philosophy of Judaism, there are people who call themselves professors of history of Jewish philosophy, some very knowledgeable men among them, but in the greatest case, and that is that of Maimonides, twelfth century, he never calls himself a philosopher. When when he speaks of his *opinion*, his view, he says the view of the Torah, the law, not his opinion. And one could cite other examples of that. In other words, I think the more seriously people take this matter, the more they are confronted with a deep conflict.

Now could it then not be that the law, say, the Torah, and philosophy live on two different planets, without touching one another, without affecting one another? Is philosophy essentially, congenitally a particularity of one kind of men called the philosophers, as distinct from another kind of men called the Jews? If you include the Christians, it would be the same question. Is there not possible a single or simple comprehensiveness, but from very beginning, an either-or: either you opt for philosophy or you opt for religion; no common ground except the ground of *triviality*: and we are sitting here on chairs and all kinds of . . . Or was Torah philosophy not the original alternative? Is there not a stratum behind that? No difficulty is really caused by the fact that history is not philosophy, for history, as I said before, is incomplete philosophy, although there may be historians who are a *million* times more philosophic than professional philosophers, that goes without saying.

What is common to Torah and philosophy? And I think then we come back to the answer which I gave before: *nomos*. And when the Jews were confronted with the Greek natural world . . . *nomos*—"the law." In other words, we are confronted with the original situation, the many laws, nomoi [νόμοι], the many tribes, *ethnē* [ἔθνη]. One could of—this fundamental difference is frequently called that between faith and knowledge, faith and knowledge. But there is of course a third possibility, it seems, and that is suspense of judgment, skepticism, or to use a Greek word, *skepsis* [σκέψις]. But *skepsis* doesn't mean originally what skepticism today

[vi] Mishnah Hagiga 2:1.
[vii] Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 8a.
[viii] My thanks to Professor Kenneth Hart Green for unraveling the four sources (two Biblical, two post-Biblical) of Strauss's compound saying.
[ix] Gershom Scholem (1897-1982), born Gerhard Scholem in Berlin, immigrated to Jerusalem in 1923, where he taught at the newly founded Hebrew University and became the great rediscoverer of the Jewish mystical tradition. He and Strauss were friends.

means, but [it] means "*looking* at things," "investigation." And that is something—but of course that *skepsis* belongs clearly to the side of philosophy. Objection is raised, a serious objection: Does not knowledge understood as *skepsis* lead to relativism, to use a word now frequently used? If I understand the older philosophers a bit, the answer would be "no," because this quest for knowledge, that *skepsis*, necessarily requires certain moral characters. A crooked, wicked, evil man cannot have this quest for knowledge.

This much as a general introduction. Now two more words before we go on. Now if I were asked: What is the difference between Thucydides and the Bible, in one sentence? I would say this, and we have not yet the basis, the evidence for supporting it: The key word of the Bible compared to Thucydides, is *hope*. There is no hope in Thucydides. [LS raps on the table for emphasis.] And the story of the Sicilian expedition is, so to speak, the empirical proof. If we have enough time in this course, I believe I can show it to you.

Will you, will be so kind and excuse me for a minute?[x] —adopted Roman, because he came from Spain.[xi] The greatest Tacitus scholar in our age is a New Zealander and so his British Empire feelings affect his study of Tacitus as a kind of New Zealander of classical antiquity. A really very good scholar. Symes is his name, some of you may have heard his name.[xii] Ya, that would be an interesting question. So now unless we neglect our duties—or is this not part of our duties to think about why we should read Thucydides, we should finally read Thucydides.

So we turn then—we came up to chapter 66, I hope you have it. You remember what happened before, the Athenians captured the Spartan nobility on the island of Sphacteria, and that was a terrible blow to Sparta. And the Spartans changed their mind about the wisdom of Apollo's advice to start the war with Athens, but nothing came out of that because the conditions which Cleon especially imposed on the Spartans were inacceptable to the Spartans. And there follows an incident with Megara, a city close to Athens, which was politically a defeat for Athens. We could perhaps read chapters, the end of chapter 74. Yes?

Reader:
However, as soon as the exiles got into power they held a review of the hoplites, the various bodies of troops being stationed in different parts of the city. They then picked out about a hundred men, personal enemies and also those who appeared to have been the chief collaborators with the Athenians.

LS: Namely, among the Megarians. Yes?

Reader:
The people were then forced to give their verdict openly on these men, and they were condemned and put to death. A strict oligarchy was then established in the city. It was a change of government made after a revolution by a very few people, and yet it lasted for a very long time. (4.74)

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[x] There is a break in the tape at this point.
[xi] Strauss is here discussing the Roman historian Publius Cornelius Tacitus (ca. 56-ca. 120 CE).
[xii] Sir Ronald Syme (1903-1989), born in New Zealand, from 1949 Camden Professor of Ancient History at Oxford, the leading historian of Rome of his generation.

LS: Ya. One of the many incidents of this kind to which Thucydides has referred. And now we come to a much broader enterprise, and that is the Spartan offensive under the leadership of Brasidas, an offensive to the north to destroy the Athenian empire in Thrace and thereabouts, and in Thessaly. And we see here one little point in chapter 79 to which I should draw your attention. The best thing is to read the whole chapter 79.

Reader:
In this way Brasidas got through Thessaly without any opposition before any force could be assembled to stop him, and reached Perdiccas and Chalcidice. For it was Perdiccas and the Thracian towns in revolt from Athens who, alarmed at the Athenian successes, had managed to get the army to march from the Peloponnese. The Chalcidians thought that the next Athenian attack would be against them (and at the same time the neighbouring cities who had not revolted also sent secret invitations to the Peloponnese); Perdiccas, though not openly at war with Athens, was also frightened because of his past differences with the Athenians, and in particular wanted to subdue Arrhabaeus, the King of the Lyncestians. (4.79)

LS: Yes. Next, please.

Reader:
The fact that at the time Sparta was doing so badly made it easier for them to get this army from the Peloponnese. For now—

LS: Ya, that was the point to which I wanted . . . Brasidas, in other words, that's not said, Brasidas would never have gotten that command of that expedition without the Spartan defeat at Pylos. They had to swallow Brasidas, who was rather irregular Spartan, because of their defeat there. Now a little bit later, in chapter—read the beginning of chapter 80.

Reader: This is just where I left off.
For now that the Athenians were making their attacks on the Peloponnese, and particularly on the actual territory of Sparta, the Spartans thought that the best way of diverting these attacks would be to give Athens, too, the same kind of trouble by sending an army to her allies, particularly as these allies were prepared to supply the army and were asking for it in order to be able to revolt. The Spartans were also glad to have a good excuse for sending some of their helots out of the country, since—

LS: You know the Helots are the subject population of the same race and tribe as the Spartans,[xiii] subjected by the Spartans proper. Helot means "prisoner of war." They had lower rights than—they had no full citizen rights. Yes?

Reader:
since in the present state of affairs, with Pylos in enemy hands, they feared a revolution. In fact they were so frightened of their unyielding character and of their numbers that they had had

[xiii] Although the Messenians spoke the same Doric dialect as themselves, the Spartans would have rejected the claim that the Messenians were "of the same race and tribe" as they were. They were the earlier inhabitants of Laconia whom the invading Spartans had subjugated.

recourse to the following plan. (Spartan policy with regard to the helots had always been based almost entirely on the idea of security.) They made a proclamation to the effect that the helots should choose out of their own number those who claimed to have done the best service to Sparta on the battlefield, implying that they would be given their freedom. This was, however, a test conducted in the belief that the ones who showed most spirit and came forward first to claim their freedom would be the ones most likely to turn against Sparta. So about 2,000 were selected, who put garlands on their heads and went round the temples under the impression that they were being made free men. Soon afterwards, however, the Spartans did away with them, and no one ever knew exactly how each one of them was killed. (4.80)

LS: So, Katyn forest. You remember, what Stalin did with the Polish officers in the Second World War whom he had killed in that forest in Poland?[xiv] It's not without ancient precedents. I mean, the tragedy is absolutely shocking. It was part of the secret of Spartan power. They were simply made to disappear because—the inference [is] that if people are alive but do not circulate, they might very well have been killed. This seems to have been Thucydides's diagnosis of this situation. So this is the other Sparta, the non-Brasidean Sparta, and Brasidas is of course simply an organ, an instrument of that Sparta, so that all admiration for Brasidas's nobility of character must be qualified. Thucydides gives us the facts, it's our business to draw the inference.

Now then Brasidas begins his amazing triumphant march to the north, and he comes first to a city called Acanthus, and there is a speech which he gives there at the beginning—no, at the end of chapter 84. Do you have that?

Reader: Yes.
However, because of their fears for their fruit which was still outside the walls, the people were persuaded by Brasidas to allow him to come in by himself, and to listen to what he had to say before they reached a final decision. Thus Brasidas was allowed to enter and came before the assembly. He was not at all a bad speaker either, for a Spartan. This—

LS: "For a Spartan." Ya? That's . . . "And he said such like things," also not a speech by Thucydides but composed on the basis of his understanding. This speech is extremely interesting, but it is quite long and unfortunately we cannot read it. Let us read the beginning of chapter 86, where he explains why he has come. Acanthus is an ally of Athens and he tries to win her over to the Spartan side. Yes?

Reader:
"Some of you may fear certain individuals and may be reluctant to help me, in case I should put the city into the hands of some group or other: such apprehensions are completely unjustified. I have not come here to take sides in your internal affairs, and I do not think that I should be giving you real freedom if I were to take no notice of your own constitutions—"

[xiv] In the autumn of 1939 Poland was invaded first by Germany and then the Soviet Union. Soviet security forces, the NKVD, took Polish officers and other leaders of Polish society prisoner and executed almost 22,000 of them in April and May 1940 in the forest at Katyn and elsewhere. The Soviets sought to foist these murders on the Germans; only in 1990 did they admit Stalin's responsibility for them.

LS: In other words, there was there also the famous fight between the rich and poor, the poor being on the Athenian side and the rich on the Spartan side. Ya? Yes?

Reader:
"and were to enslave either the many to the few or the few to the many. That would be even worse than being governed by foreigners, and we Spartans would earn no gratitude that way for our pains. Instead of honour and glory, we should find reproach. We should show that we ourselves had fallen a prey to those very vices of which we accuse the Athenians—" (4.86)

LS: Ya. Yes, and so he assures the Acanthians that they have nothing whatever to fear by going over to the Spartans, because the highest Spartan authorities have sworn the most solemn oath that they will conduct the war only for the liberation of Greece, and therefore in particular Acanthus, from Athenian imperialism. But these are the same people who have these two thousand helots secretly—how do you say that in the modern language? What do you do with people—

Student: Rubbed out.[xv]

LS: Ya, something like that.

Student: Liquidated. Liquidate.

LS: Ya. So, I mean, it is *unbelievable*. If it were not so very terrible, one could only be amused by this degree of hypocrisy. There is a further reference to the oath in—let us read chapter 87.

Reader:
"If, now that I have made my position plain, you are going to say that you are unable to help, but have friendly feelings and so ought not to be made to suffer for rejecting me; that you regard liberty as a risky thing to have, that it is right to offer it only to those capable of receiving it and not to force it on anyone against his will, then I shall call upon the gods and heroes of your country to witness that I came here to help you and could not make you understand it. I shall lay waste your land and try to bring you over by force. And, once this point has been reached, I shall not consider that I am doing anything wrong. I shall consider that I have two good reasons on my side which force me to take this action: first, I must prevent Sparta from suffering from the money which you, our friends, will go on paying to the Athenians, if you refuse to join us; secondly, I must not allow the Hellenes to be hindered by you from throwing off their chains. Otherwise we should have—'"[xvi]

LS: —in this compulsion. "We must prevent you from being the sole obstacle to the general will of Greece—*la volonté Générale de la Grèce*, which is freedom. And you, for some strange reason, are allied with Athens: that cannot be tolerated." You see? The world hasn't changed.

Now we come to another [story], after this fantastic story of Acanthus—and mind you, Brasidas was the most noble Spartan—there comes another story which has claim on our interest for

[xv] Strauss asks the student to repeat what he has said.
[xvi] The tape was changed at this point.

another reason, and that is the story of the Delion. The Delion was the sanctuary of Apollo at the border of Attica and Boeotia, Boeotia being the part of Greece west of Attica. And this battle ended with a terrible defeat of the Athenians. What Brasidas did in the north, in Acanthus and other places, there were the grave Athenian defeats, and now comes this other thing in Delion. The fight in Delion is about the sanctuary of Apollo. I read to you a passage here from Gomme's commentary. I think I have referred to it last time, but I could find [it], I didn't have the copy. Gomme is the most famous contemporary commentator. He is no longer alive. Delion is one of the battles about which we have details of some of the Athenian participants; in the other cases we know more or less only what Thucydides tells us. Socrates, Laches, both of them fifty years old or nearby; Alcibiades in the cavalry on this occasion, and he gives us passages: *Apology* 28e, *Laches* 181e, *Symposium* 221a.

"Xenophon, according to some ancient writers, professes to be skeptical of Socrates's courage, and even about his presence at this and other battles, relying on the silence of Thucydides. Further, as Grote observes [Grote, the famous vindicator of the sophists—LS], Socrates was exposing his life at Delium nearly at the same time when Aristophanes was exposing him to derision in the comedy of the *Clouds*, as a dreamer, alike morally worthless and physically incapable."[xvii]

Ya, it is absolutely impossible to know what he is getting at, absolutely impossible. Whether this passage, this description of Socrates a model soldier is a deliberate idealization, falsification, or whether Socrates was really present. This is at the beginning of the *Charmides*, I believe, where he says after the battle of Potidaea . . . Athens. Have you heen present at the battle when you came back to Athens? And he says: I have been present—paregenomên [παρεγενόμην.]" That's all that he said about the battle of Potidaea. So that doesn't prove that Socrates was not a great soldier, but it surely proves that it was not important to him. It was much less important than what was going on in Athens regarding what they now would call culture, what they called at that time "love of . . . " And this of course—in the nineteenth century, this super-political century, put all the emphasis on that.[xviii] By the way, what he[xix] says about Xenophon, only he infers that from those later writers, but I believe inferences which are in accord with what Xenophon alludes to.

This only in passing. And the funny thing is that in the passage, I think in the passage on the *Apology* is the only one where Socrates *himself*, in a public speech addressed to the whole assembly, speaks about his military adventures. In the other case it is Laches, [2]Laches's memory. And Alcibiades's statements about Socrates as a soldier are stated by a completely intoxicated man, who is not the best witness to anything, so we would have to rely ultimately on the *Apology*. Now there Socrates proves, mentions in passing that he has stood and not run away. Now standing and not running away, that was Laches's definition of courage refuted by Socrates in the *Laches*, because some tribes, like the Scythians, famous warlike people . . . win their battles by flight. So these things have to be considered if one wants to write the history or biography of . . . And it is wiser to say nothing about it.

[xvii] Gomme, *Historical Commentary* 3, 568.
[xviii] Here Strauss must refer to Grote, a nineteenth-century authority, rather than to Gomme, a twentieth-century one.
[xix] I.e., Gomme.

So, this only in passing. Then there comes the final battle about Delion, and the Athenian commander is called Hippocrates, who gives the speech in chapter 95. No, I'm sorry; first there is the leader of the Boeotians, called Pagondas. It's in chapter 91 and 92. Ya, I think we should read it.

Reader: 91 and 92?

LS: 92, only 92. Pagondas's speech—that's the leader of Boeotians. You know Boeotia? The main city is Thebes, out of which later on Epaminondas and Pelopidas came. And for some time it was a really great city and later on destroyed by Philip, the father of Alexander but the traitor to Greece in the Persian War. Now read chapter 92.

Reader:
"Men of Boeotia, it ought never to have entered into the head of any one of us, your generals, that we should avoid battle with the Athenians simply because we no longer find them in our own country. They came here across the frontier, they have built a fortified post here, and their intention is to lay waste our land. They are therefore, I should imagine, still our enemies in the place from which they set out to do us harm; indeed they are our enemies wherever we may manage to catch them. And if at the present moment any of you think that it is safer to leave them alone, you should get rid of that idea. When one is being attacked and has to think about the safety of one's own country, one cannot go in for calculations about what is prudent. That is more the thing to be done by those whose own country is secure and who, in the desire to make further conquests, are deliberately attacking someone else. And it is your tradition to fight a foreign army of invasion, whether it is in your country or anywhere near it. Much more should we do so in the case of Athenians, who also share the same frontier with us. In all relations with one's neighbours freedom is the result of being able to hold one's own, and as for these neighbours, who, not content with those close to them, are trying to spread their domination far and wide, with them we must simply fight it out to the last. We have, just across the water, the example of Euboea, and we know also how most of the rest of Hellas feels about Athens. And we should realize that, while others fight battles with their neighbours for one frontier or another, in our case, if we are conquered, there will be no more frontier disputes, because there will be only one frontier for the whole country. They will just come in and take what we have by force. In fact the Athenians are the most dangerous of all people to have living next door to one.

"Then, too, when people attack their neighbours in a spirit of great confidence in their own strength—as is the case with the Athenians now—they usually march all the more boldly against an enemy who makes no move against them and only defends himself on his own ground, but when they find someone who comes out to meet them outside his own frontiers and who will, if the occasion arises, take the initiative in attack, they are not so ready to come to grips. We have experience of this ourselves in dealing with these Athenians. By our victory over them at Coronea, in the days when, because of our internal quarrels, they were occupying Boeotia, we made our country secure right up to the present day. This is what we should remember, and the older ones among us must live up to what they did in the past, while the younger men, sons of those who did such great deeds at that time, must make it their endeavour not to disgrace that

gallant reputation which is theirs by inheritance. We can be confident that we shall have on our side the god whose temple they have unlawfully fortified and now hold—"

LS: Temple of Apollo. Ya.

Reader:
"confident too in the favorable appearance of the victims which we have sacrificed. Let us then go forward against them and show them that they must get what they want by attacking people who will not defend themselves, but as for us, we make it a point of honour always to fight for the freedom of our country and never unjustly to enslave the country of others, and from us they will not get away without having to fight for it." (4.92)

LS: This is the Boeotian. Now let us look at the counterpart, the Athenian commander, Hippocrates. Where is that chapter? 95. Ya?

Reader:
"Athenians, this will only be a short speech, but a short speech is as good as a long one when it is addressed to brave men. I do not wish to rouse your emotions so much as to remind you of the facts. I do not want any of you to think that because we are in the country of foreigners this danger into which we are throwing ourselves does not concern us. We shall fight in their country, but we shall be fighting for our own. If we are victorious, the Peloponnesians, without the support of the Boeotian cavalry, will never again invade our land, and in one battle you will both gain this country and do much to free your own. Go forward, then, to meet them in the spirit of citizens of a city which we are all proud to call the first in Hellas, and like sons of the fathers who defeated these people before at Oenophyta with Myronides and so became the masters of Boeotia." (4.95)

LS: This was the Athenian speech. What is the most striking difference between Boeotian and the Athenian speech? I would say the complete absence of any reference to the gods at all . . . in the Athenian speech. And what happens? The Athenians are terribly defeated. So even assuming that Pagondas was an abominable hypocrite, his hypocrisy helped him. But it doesn't have to help him; that's the irony of hyprocrisy, that one doesn't know that. Now and then there comes a long question, in chapter 97, about an alleged Athenian sacrilege when they fortify the temple. If you will read that, perhaps in chapter 97, paragraph 2, about the middle of that paragraph.

Reader:
Meanwhile a herald from the Athenians on his way to ask for the Athenian dead was met by a Boeotian herald, who turned him back, telling him that nothing was to be gained until he, the Boeotian, had completed his own mission. The Boeotian herald then came before the Athenians and delivered his message from the Boeotians, which was as follows: "that the Athenians had done wrong and transgressed against Hellenic law. It was a rule established everywhere that an invader of another country should keep his hands off the temples that were in that country. The Athenians, however, had fortified Delium and were living in it. They were doing all the things there that men do in unconsecrated ground; they were drawing and using in the ordinary way the water which Boeotians never were allowed to touch except for the washing of hands before sacrifices. It was therefore for the god as well as for themselves that the Boeotians, in the name

of the divinities of the place and of Apollo, warned the Athenians first of all to leave the temple and then take back what was their own."

LS: Ya. And now let us read a little bit further on in the next chapter the Athenian reply.

Reader:
After this speech from the herald, the Athenians sent their own herald to the Boeotians and declared that they had done nothing wrong with regard to the temple, nor would they do any harm to it in the future, if they could help it; it was not with any such intentions that they had occupied the temple in the first place, but only to use it in self-defence against the Boeotians, who were the real aggressors; under Hellenic law whoever was in control of a piece of country, whether large or small, invariably also took possession of the temples in that country, with the duty to maintain, as far as possible, the usual religious ceremonies— (4.98)

LS: Ya, let us stop here. So in other words, that is a question in canon law, so to speak, and Gomme, who is a modern historian, has no use for that, and speaks—I do not know when or where—about Thucydides's strange interest in this kind of question. But that was a very important question, not for Thucydides himself but for the Greeks of his time, for his readers, and one can easily bring examples from other centuries, from other peoples. Let me see. Ya. "We have here a good example of the stock argument as used by cultured people to justify any breaking of the rules of war. Thucydides is curiously interested in this sophistical stuff."[xx] Ya, if one may speak of prejudices, I think one may say that Gomme, in all his learnedness, is . . . stocked with prejudices. Where does he draw the line between religion and superstition? In the eighteenth century, the age of deism, it was easy to draw the line; I mean, every addition to pure deism was at least suspect of being superstition. But today, after this deistic natural theology has lost its power on the minds of most people, how can you dare to draw a line? You simply follow the purely subjective value judgment, something which no social scientist is permitted to engage with.

So now the next, the last great theme of book 4 is Amphipolis, a city belonging to Athens, in which Thucydides had a special interest—that was the country in which his hereditary possessions lie, the silver mines[xxi] and this kind of thing, and which—and this was lost, hardly by—ya, well, it's hard to say whether it was his fault, but at any rate, he didn't save it. Let us perhaps read chapter 104, paragraph 4, that is towards the end. That is the only reference to Thucydides as a general; this we should at least take note of.

Reader:
In fact the party which was opposed to those who wanted to betray the town was in the majority and had succeeded in preventing the gates being opened immediately. They and Eucles, the general from Athens who was there to defend the place, sent to the other general in Thrace, Thucydides, the son of Olorus, the author of this history, who was then at the island of Thasos—

LS: Thasos, an island.

[xx] Gomme, *Historical Commentary* 3, 569.
[xxi] These were in fact not silver but gold mines, and as such much more valuable (cf. Thucydides 4.105.1).

Reader:
the island of Thasos, a colony of the Parians, about half a day's sail from Amphipolis, asking him to come to their relief. As soon as he heard the news, he set sail at once with the seven ships that he had with him. His first aim, certainly, was to reach Amphipolis in time to prevent its surrender, and, if he failed in that object, at any rate to secure Eion before Brasidas could get there.

LS: And this is the sole reference to his activity. And he was later on exiled, and the prevailing view is—not implausible—that he was exiled because he came too late to save Amphipolis. But that is only how little he was interested in *his* personal fate; for him something broader was at stake. Now his policy is described in the next chapters, and we cannot read that. There is only one little point, a few little points which I would like to draw your attention to. Chapter 117, end. Ya, read only this sentence. An armistice is concluded between—

Reader: Sparta and her allies.

LS: Ya, the following one. You see here now comes a literal quotation, at least claims to be literal, not "about," but "this *is* the text." Whether this is the text or not one does not know, because there is an inscription, but unfortunately [an] incomplete inscription, and this inscription might have been made at a different time, so it's a hard and anyway insoluble question. But the point is that Thucydides here claims to quote literally. I believe that has a profound reason. There are other examples of such things later on, when the great armistice comes, and it is this: this is an armistice, a kind of peace judgment where the two hostile forces, Athens and Sparta, *unite* [LS raps on the table for emphasis], where the fundamental dissension is at least apparently overcome. But that is exactly what Thucydides is doing in his own work by giving a complete interpretation of the Peloponnesian War. While he is an Athenian citizen, he *ceases* to be a mere Athenian citizen and he is as critical of Athens as he is of Sparta, although he had greater admiration for Athens, for not merely local patriotic reasons. And just—we can say peace treaties are on the political plane an equivalent to what Thucydides is doing on the highest plane, transcending the partial.

Ya, the key interest of this whole section is this: Who was the Athenian chief commander in the north when Brasidas made this great attempt to destroy Athens' power even more? Cleon! Cleon was the opponent of Brasidas, and Cleon, the victor at Pylos and Sphacteria, [was] now confronted with the greatest Spartan. Brasidas wins the battle, but falls. Cleon is also killed. So a real episode comes to the end, and that is the preparation of the so-called he Peace of Nicias, the peace of, we would say of 1918—you know, where Foch said, "That's not a peace, that's an armistice for ten years."[xxii] This armistice did not even last ten years.

And there are a few points which we might—there is a speech of Brasidas in 126. It's of course not literal, but again "about that." You know the usual phrase, *toiade* [τοιάδε]. But the strange

[xxii] Ferdinand Foch (1851-1929), Marshal of France, commander in chief of the allied army forces in WWI. He made the cited comment not in 1918 but in 1919 of the Treaty of Versailles imposed by the Allies on Germany that year, and he derided it as an armistice not for ten but for twenty years. What outraged him was not (as one might suppose) the severity of the treaty but rather its lenity. He correctly foresaw that it would not prevent Germany from rebuilding its military power.

thing is, there is no speech by Cleon, the terrific demagogue who had swayed Athenian politics and had intimidated the people so much. No speech of his. Brasidas, a Spartan, a good orator in the Spartan way, makes a speech. Cleon: no speech. I think that is highly remarkable. And then one last point. Chapter 132, let us read that.

Reader:
While Scione was being invested, Perdiccas sent a herald to the Athenian generals and made peace with Athens. This was because of the hatred he felt for Brasidas in connection with the retreat from Lyncus, directly after which he had begun to negotiate with the Athenians. The Spartan Ischagoras was just then on the point of marching with an army to join Brasidas, and Perdiccas, partly because Nicias urged him, now that peace had been made, to give some proof to the Athenians that he could be relied upon, partly because he himself no longer wanted Peloponnesians in his country, got to work with his friends in Thessaly (where he was always on good terms with the leading men), and so put such obstacles in the way of the Spartan expeditionary force that they did not even approach the Thessalians. Ischagoras himself, however, with Ameinias and Aristeus did succeed in reaching Brasidas. They had been sent out by the Spartans to inspect the state of affairs, and they brought with them from Sparta (contrary to the usual practice of their government) some quite young men to be appointed as governors of the cities, so that this task should not have to be entrusted to the people available on the spot. Brasidas put Clearidas, the son of Cleonymus, in charge of Amphipolis, and Pasitelidas, the son of Hegesander, in charge of Torone. (4.132)

LS: In other words, the Spartans changed their policy of liberation and established their system of so called harmosts.[xxiii] How did the Nazis call them, or the Russians, these people who governed, like Heydrich[xxiv] in Czechoslovakia, governors of the protectorates? At any rate, they made Sparta hated within a very short time. And the liberation policy of Sparta was of course sheer hypocrisy. Ya, the full story of the death of Cleon and Brasidas comes only in the next book. However, we anticipate it. Shall we invest the other five minutes, only a little point in book 5? Chapter 13. You have it?

Reader:
At the very beginning of winter, Ramphias and his force advanced to Pierium in Thessaly. The Thessalians, however, were unwilling to let them go farther; Brasidas, for whom they were bringing reinforcements, was dead; so they turned back home, thinking that the time for action had passed now that the Athenians had been defeated and then gone away, and that they themselves were not capable of carrying out the plans which Brasidas had had in mind. But their main reason for returning was that they knew at the time when they set out that Spartan opinion was, in fact, in favour of peace. (5.13)

[xxiii] Greek ἁρμοστής (*harmostēs),* joiner or adaptor, the Spartan term for an appointed military governor. While the term appears to have been in use only from ca. 405, the present passage offers the first known instances of the institution.

[xxiv] Reinhard Heydrich (1904-1942), high-ranking German security official and principal architect of the Holocast, praised by Hitler for his heart of iron. Wherever he went he gave proof of his inordinate cruelty. From September 1941 Acting Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, assassinated by Czech partisans in June 1942. There is of course no comparison of the harshness with which the Spartans governed with that of the Nazis.

LS: So the death of these two leading generals, on both sides in the same battle, changed the situation radically. The doves win out in both cities. But what does that mean? Let us read chapter 14, beginning.

Reader:
Indeed, what now took place was that, after the battle at Amphipolis and the withdrawal of Ramphias from Thessaly, neither side went on with the war. Instead they began to think how to make peace. The Athenians had suffered a serious blow at Delium and another one soon afterward at Amphipolis; they no longer possessed the same confidence in their strength which had induced them to reject previous offers of peace, in the belief that their good fortune at that time would carry them through to final victory.

LS: That is that old theme, which was mentioned by the Spartans: "You have a piece of good luck? Don't trust it." You remember? Yes. Now read on, go on.

Reader:
They were also apprehensive about the allies, fearing that they might be encouraged by these defeats to revolt on a more serious scale, and they regretted that they had not seized upon the excellent opportunity of making peace after Pylos. The Spartans on their side had found that the war had gone very differently from what they had imagined when they believed that they could destroy the power of Athens in a few years simply by laying waste her land. The disaster suffered on the island had been something which had never been known before in Sparta; her territory was being raided from Pylos and from Cythera; the helots were deserting, and there was always the fear that even those who remained loyal might gain confidence from the others and take advantage of the situation to make a revolution— (5.15)

LS: Yes, so these were the true motives, peace . . . Beginning of chapter 16.

Reader:
Now Athens had suffered another defeat at Amphipolis, and Cleon and Brasidas were dead—the two people who on each side had been most opposed to peace, Brasidas because—

LS: Yes, they were the hawks, in present-day lingo. Yes?

Reader:
Brasidas because of success and honour which had come to him through war, Cleon because he thought that in a time of peace and quiet people would be more likely to notice his evil doings and less likely to believe his slander of others.

LS: Ya. So in other words, there are selfish motives also in Brasidas—the war was a source of his great fame and therefore he was in favor of war. Ya, these things need of course a very long . . . here is mention, shortly before, of the divine honors, which were awarded to Brasidas in Amphipolis. That's in chapter 11. And then later on, in chapter 16, we find a story, a strange story—16, paragraph 2, of the priestess in Delphi. Do you have that?

Reader: Yes. This concerns Pleistoanax?

LS: A little bit, ya.

Reader:
whenever anything went wrong, they invariably brought his name forward in an attempt to convince the Spartans that what had happened was due to this illegal restoration of his.

Is that too far, or?

LS: No, the death of that priestess, ya?

Reader:
The charge made against him was that he and his brother Aristocles had bribed the priestess at Delphi to give oracles to the Spartan delegations which had come on various official visits, commanding them to bring home from abroad the seed of the demigod son of Zeus, or else they would have to plough with a ploughshare of silver. He was exiled because he was supposed to have been bribed to retreat from Attica, and, because of his fear of the Spartans, he had built half of his house inside the grounds of the temple of Zeus. So in the end, according to his accusers, he had induced the Spartans in the nineteenth year of his exile to Lyceaum— (5.16)

LS: So in other words, in that part of the house he had a sanctuary. So this is mentioned—the part fits in somehow with the whole story. So we must stop here. It would be very interesting to go on, but I cannot do it and I think our time is up anyway. So let us begin next time with the bulk of book 5. Book 5 is in one way the most exciting book, because it contains the famous dialogue between Athenians and Melians, the only dialogue proper in Thucydides and where the question concerns precisely justice and such right, might and where the Athenians take the most extreme view which is popularly best known from Thrasymachus in the *Republic* and Callicles in the *Gorgias*. It's very different, but they are superficially close . . . similarities. It's the most theoretical discussion in Thucydides, and I think we should pay attention. And the strange thing is that in the fifth book there is no speech except that dialogue between the Athenians and Melians, as if Thucydides wanted to make it as narrative and factual in order to concentrate *all* the power of speech in this very short but *decisive* exchange regarding Brasidas.[xxv] And that is very hard to say what Thucydides thinks there. In one way it is simple: the next big event is the Sicilian expedition and that means the Sicilian disaster for Athens. But this disaster did not bring down Athens, as Thucydides says: the Athenians had an amazing resiliency. And if I read him correctly, what brought the Athenians down was the folly of the leading Athenians of that time in disregarding Alcibiades's advice regarding a naval battle in the north by the saying, "You have nothing more to."[xxvi] Alcibiades was an exile, of course; again, "You have nothing more to say, you do what we regard as fine." Then they are defeated and that led to the ruin of Athens, because the leader of the Spartans at that battle of Aegospotamoi was Lysander, a very—one of

[xxv] It is unclear why Strauss should name Brasidas here, athough there is a mention of him in the Melian dialogue (Thucydides 5.110.2.

[xxvi] Although this passage is confusing, Strauss seems to allude to Xenophon *Hellenica* 2.1.25-28, in which the exiled Alcibiades offers advice to the Athenian commanders on the eve of the battle of Aegospotami which they ignore with disastrous results.

the harshest and most repulsive Spartans, but he won the battle and later the war by the foolish disregard of Alcibiades's advice. In this strange way it comes out that however objectionable Alcibiades was on so many grounds, he could have saved Athens, and without any particular nastiness in that; I mean, his nastiness consisted in his betraying Athens and going over to the Spartans in the middle of the war and giving the Spartans the recipe for defeating Athens. But he could say he was compelled to do so; the alternative would have been that the Athenians would have cut his throat because of his alleged or real participation in the mutilation of the Hermae, you know, the monuments in honor of Hermes.

Good. So I thank you that you have been so patient with me. This is—[3]

Session 10: no date
Book 5, chapters 25-113

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —beginning of book 5, and so that we have the rest of the semester for books 6 and 7. It is impossible to cover the whole work of Thucydides in a full academic year, and especially in a year in which I have spent much of the time in a hospital. Good.

Now a brief introduction of what we are going to do today. The Peloponnesian War, the subject of the war, consists of two parts—first, up to the peace of Nicias in the year 421, and then the Sicilian expedition, which leads up to the complete defeat of Athens. That is from 415 to 404. In between these two parts of the war there is a kind of cold war, if I may use this now common expression. Very roughly, we can say the first four books deal with the first part, war, and the last four books deal with the second one. The situation is comparable to something which happened in our century: there were the two world wars, and we would say of course the First and the Second World War, but someone could say, not without injustice, it was only one war, interrupted by an armistice of about twenty years. That is at least an interpretation that is parallel to what Thucydides is doing here in the work.

Now at the beginning of—the great event in book 4, which led up to the peace of Nicias, was the Athenians' conquest of the island of Pylos and taking prisoners, that is a large part of the Spartan nobility. The leader of that expedition was a man called Cleon, obviously a very able man but obviously not a very nice man. The Spartans' counteraction was an expedition to the north, to Thrace, under the leadership of Brasidas, who was a much nicer man, perhaps the nicest Spartan. But then the two men met, as it were; they fell in the same battle in the north. And they were the leaders of the hawks on both sides. And after their death peace became possible, and that was the Peace of Nicias.

Now after the Peace of Nicias in 421 a new alignment took place. I mean, these things happen more or less after all wars. There was a powerful city, an ally of Sparta, called Argos in the Peloponnesus, which after the Peace of Nicias turned over to Athens, and the new alignment was the work of a new man. This new man was Alcibiades, who makes his first appearance here and changes the picture. Alcibiades had to find, to establish himself as the leading man against the men who had made the Peace of Nicias. And that is in the first place Nicias, but also Laches, two personages known to a few or at least to some of you from Plato's dialogue *Laches*. And Nicias and Laches are the chief persons. There are some interesting things at the beginning of book 5; for example, there is a speech by Brasidas before the decisive battle. Brasidas is, to repeat, the Spartan leader. There is there no speech of Cleon, and that has a certain significance. Cleon, that demagogue, before the decisive action doesn't speak; and Brasidas, as a Spartan being a laconic man, speaks and is responsible for the Spartan victory there.

Now after this speech of Brasidas in chapter 9 there is no further speech in book 5, and that's quite remarkable. All kinds of theories have been formed which are not worth our consideration, namely, that book 5 has not been fully elaborated and Thucydides died before he could do it. We don't know, [we] know nothing about it. It makes perfect sense to assume that Thucydides deliberately did not wish to have any speech between that speech of Brasidas in chapter 8 and

that big speech at the very end of book 5, that very big speech being the so-called Melian dialogue, a dialogue between the Athenian ambassadors and the leaders of the island of Melos, and this is one of the most resplendent pieces in Thucydides, and one can see that Thucydides wanted to bring out its splendor by the absence of speeches in between. So now I suggest that we consider first the Melian dialogue and use the rest of the time, if any, for discussing some interesting passages in the rest of book 5. Now the Melian dialogue begins in chapter 84, to which we should turn. Do you have it?

Reader: Yes. Should I begin reading?

LS: Ya, begin reading.

Reader:
Next summer, Alcibiades sailed to Argos with twenty ships and seized 300 Argive citizens who were still suspected of being pro-Spartan. These were put by the Athenians into the nearby islands under Athenian control.

The Athenians also made an expedition against the island of Melos. They had thirty of their own ships, six from Chios, and two from Lesbos; 1,200 hoplites, 300 archers, and twenty mounted archers, all from Athens, and about 1,500 hoplites from the allies and the islanders.

The Melians are a colony from Sparta. They had refused to join the Athenian empire like the other islanders, and at first had remained neutral without helping either side; but afterwards, when the Athenians had brought force to bear on them by laying waste their land, they had become open enemies of Athens.

Now the generals Cleomedes, the son of Lycomedes, and Tisias, the son of Tisimachus, encamped with the above force in Melian territory and, before doing any harm to the land, first of all sent representatives to negotiate. The Melians did not invite these representatives to speak before the people, but asked them to make the statement for which they had come in front of the governing body and the few. (5.84)

LS: Now let us stop here. So this is the situation in which the conversation takes place. It is in the absence of the common people, namely, Melos, being a Spartan colony, is of course not a democracy and they don't want the common people to have any say in the matter. And that is of some interest, because the three most famous documents of what now is called Machiavellianism, or maybe extreme Machiavellianism, we have from antiquity: the Melian dialogue, Thrasymachus's speech in the first book of the *Republic*, and Callicles's speech in Plato's *Gorgias*, are all behind closed doors, are not public speeches. We must keep this in mind if one thinks that Machiavellianism was—and extreme Machiavellianism was something generally accepted in Athens under the influence of the so-called sophists. It was not quite so . . . They were rather beastly, the Athenians and the other Greeks, but there was no theory, no ideology universally acknowledged behind that. So this is the situation. And now let us read the speech, but first the last sentence of chapter 84.

Reader:

The Athenian representatives then spoke about as follows:

LS: Ya, in other words, it's not literal. Thucydides himself composed the dialogue. Yes?

Reader:
Athenians: "So we are not to speak before the people, no doubt in case the mass of the people should hear once and for all and without interruption an argument from us which is both persuasive and incontrovertible, and should so be led astray. This, we realize, is your motive in bringing us here to speak before the few. Now suppose that you who sit here should make assurance doubly sure. Suppose that you, too, should refrain from dealing with every point in detail in a set speech, and should instead interrupt us whenever we say something controversial and deal with that before going on to the next point?"

LS: In other words, the Athenians are perfectly willing to be conciliatory. You don't want long popular speeches? All right, let us have a dialogue, a strict dialogue: a short dialogue, short speech, as Socrates once said,and let us answer in each case. Yes?

Reader:
Athenians: Tell us first whether you approve of this suggestion of ours. (5.85)

The Council of the Melians replied as follows:

"No one can object to each of us putting forward our own views in a calm atmosphere. That is perfectly reasonable. What is scarcely consistent with such a proposal is the present threat, indeed the certainty, of your making war on us. We see that you have come prepared to judge the argument yourselves, and that the likely end of it all will be either war, if we prove that we are in the right, and so refuse to surrender, or else slavery." (5.86)

LS: So in other words, we have no choice but to accept your kind, conciliatory proposal because you have the hardware. Yes?

Reader:
Athenians: If you are going to spend the time in enumerating your suspicions about the future, or if you have met here for any other reason except to look the facts in the face and on the basis of these facts to consider how you can save your city from destruction, there is no point in our going on with this discussion. If, however, you will do as we suggest, then we will speak on. (5.87)

LS: So in other words, the Athenian men laid down positively the basis of the discussion: what is present and visible to all, meaning the Athenian armament. If you will take this into consideration and argue on that basis, then it is useful we have an exchange, but if you bring in any other irrelevancies, then it is a waste of time and words. Yes?

Reader:
Melians: It is natural and understandable that people who are placed as we are should have recourse to all kinds of arguments and different points of view. However, you are right in saying

that we are met together here to discuss the safety of our country and, if you will have it so, the discussion shall proceed on the lines that you have laid down.

LS: So the Melians give in for very good reasons: because they have no choice. Yes?

Reader:
Athenians: Then we on our side will use no fine phrases saying, for example, that we have a right to our empire because we defeated the Persians, or that we have come against you now because of the injuries you have done us—a great mass of words that nobody would believe.

LS: Now these are arguments the Athenians have used on other occasions, for example, in the assembly in Sparta, as you may remember. Yes?

Reader:
And we ask you on your side not to imagine that you will influence us by saying that you, though a colony of Sparta, have not joined Sparta in the war, or that you have never done us any harm. Instead we recommend that you should try to get what is possible for you to get, taking into consideration what we both really do think; since you know as well as we do that, when these matters are discussed by practical people, the standard of justice depends on the equality of power to compel and that in fact the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept. (5.89)

LS: Ya, there is only one point that is manifestly not well translated: that they say that the just things in the *human* logos [λόγος], in the *human* speech, is just on the basis of equal necessity, equal compulsion. Justice is possible only if the two parts are more or less equal. If one is stronger than the other, then the stronger [carries] it. That's the point that the Athenians make. Now there can really be no injustice of the stronger to the weaker: only if they are equal[1] , reasonably can there be justice. That leads to great questions, but that is the Athenian assertion and let us see what the Melians will do about it. The Melians?

Reader:
Melians: Then in our view (since you force us to leave justice out of account and to confine ourselves to self-interest)—

LS: Ya, "to the useful," "to the useful," as distinguished from justice.

Student: My translation here has "the expedient."

LS: . . . Ya.

Reader:
(since you force us to leave justice out of account and to confine ourselves to the useful)—in our view it is at any rate useful that you should not destroy a principle that is to the general good of all men—namely—

LS: "To the common good," not of all men. They didn't care for all men. They didn't care for the Chinese, for example. Yes, the common good, meaning the common good of the Athenians and the Melians. Ya. Yes?

Reader:
namely, that in the case of all who fall into danger there should be such a thing as fair play and just dealing, and that such people should be allowed to use and to profit by arguments that fall short of a mathematical accuracy. And this is a principle which affects you as much as anybody, since your own fall would be visited by the most terrible vengeance and would be an example to the world.

LS: In other words, the common good is that the Athenians should not conquer Melos. That it is good for the Melians is clear, because Melos will not be destroyed. That it is good for the Athenians appears if you consider the consequences, because the Athenians will become hated as tyrants even more than they are hated now, and so that is an appeal to self-interest, to the expedient as distinguished from justice, if justice means something very different. Yes?

Reader:
Athenians: As for us, even assuming that our empire does come to an end, we are not despondent about what would happen next. One is not so much frightened of being conquered by a power which rules over others, as Sparta does (not that we are concerned with Sparta now), as of what would happen if a ruling power is attacked and defeated by its own subjects. So far as this point is concerned, you can leave it to us to face the risks involved. What we shall do now is to show you that it is for the good of our own empire that we are here and that it is for the preservation of your city that we shall say what we are going to say. We do not want any trouble in bringing you into our empire, and we want you to be spared for the good both of yourselves and of ourselves. (5.91)

LS: Ya, that is the Athenian answer to the common good argument: the good of the Athenians is their empire, and the good of the Melians is the preservation of their city. They're two different good things, but the Athenians think these two things can be reconciled without making them, however, a common good.

Reader:
Melians: And how could it be just as good for us to be the slaves as for you to be the masters?

LS: In other words, what *you* say is not a common good, which the Athenians have by implication admitted. Yes?

Reader:
Athenians: You, by giving in, would save yourselves from disaster; we, by not destroying you, would be able to profit from you.

LS: In that sense, there would be a common good: there would be a profit for the Melians and their self-preservation and for the Athenians in the greater security of the Empire. Yes?

Reader:
Melians: So you would not agree to our being neutral, friends instead of enemies, but allies of neither side? (5.94)

LS: In other words, there is something beyond the alternatives hitherto discussed, namely, neutrality. We won't attack you, you won't attack us, and that would be to common benefit. What do the Athenians say?

Reader:
Athenians: No, because it is not so much your hostility that injures us; it is rather the case that, if we were on friendly terms with you, our subjects would regard that as a sign of weakness in us, whereas your hatred is evidence of our power. (5.95)

LS: So in other words, neutrality is not a good solution from the Athenian point of view, because it would be a confession of the weakness of the Athenians if they would permit the Melians to remain neutral. Yes?

Reader:
Melians: Is that your subjects' idea of fair play—that no distinction should be made between people who are quite unconnected with you and people who are mostly your own colonists or else rebels whom you have conquered? (5.96)

LS: One thing I must say that I should have said before: colonists has not quite the same meaning here as it has today. "Colonists" means you have people of the same stock. Ya? Of the same stock who were sent out, and there is therefore a kind of family relation, and therefore the Athenians must make a distinction between colonists and noncolonists. Noncolonists, they may remain neutral, but if they fulfill another condition, specified immediately. But colonists must—our colonists must be fighting on our side, otherwise we have already conceded defeat. And what is the other condition?

Reader:
Athenians: So far as right and wrong are concerned they think that there is no difference between the two, that those who still preserve their independence do so because they are strong, and that if we fail to attack them it is because we are afraid. So that by conquering you we shall increase not only the size but the security of our empire. We rule the sea and you are islanders, and weaker islanders too than the others; it is therefore particularly important that you should not escape. (5.97)

LS: So in other words, if some people living inland would remain neutral, that would be of no consequence for Athens, but if any island can remain neutral, that is the sign Athens does not truly control the seas, rule the waves, and then they have to do something about it. Yes?

Reader:
Melians: But do you think there is no security for you in what we suggest? For here again, since you will not let us mention justice, but tell us to give in to your interests, we, too must tell you what our interests are and, if yours and ours happen to coincide, we must try to persuade you of

the fact. Is it not certain that you will make enemies of all states who are at present neutral, when they see what is happening here and naturally conclude that in course of time you will attack them too? Does not this mean that you are strengthening the enemies you have already and are forcing others to become your enemies even against their intentions and their inclinations? (5.98)

LS: Ya. So in other words, they continue with their argument that the Athenians, by not admitting neutrality, make all the world their enemies. And an argument of which the Athenians have disposed by their remark that they do not forbid neutrality in general, they forbid only neutrality of their colonists and of islanders, and no others. Yes?

Reader:
Athenians: As a matter of fact we are not so much frightened of states on the continent. They have their liberty, and this means that it will be a long time before they begin to take precautions against us. We are more concerned about islanders like yourselves, who are still unsubdued, or subjects who have already become embittered by the constraint which our empire imposes on them. These are the people who are most likely to act in a reckless manner and to bring themselves and us, too, into the most obvious danger. (5.99)

LS: The Athenians state only now somewhat more explicitly what they have said before about the limited range of their principle of not admitting neutrality. Yes?

Reader:
Melians: Then surely, if such hazards are taken by you to keep your empire and by your subjects to escape from it, we who are still free would show ourselves great cowards and weaklings if we failed to face everything that comes rather than submit to slavery. (5.100)

LS: In other words, freedom is such a great good that it overrides all these considerations of safety and self-preservation. What do the Athenians say to that?

Reader:
Athenians: No, not if you are sensible. This is no fair fight, with honour on one side and shame on the other. It is rather a question of saving your lives and not resisting those who are far too strong for you. (5.101)

LS: So it is not a matter—it is not a question which one can solve by reference to the glory of heroism—just survival or nonsurvival. Yes?

Reader:
Melians: Yet we know that in war fortune sometimes makes the odds more level than could be expected from the difference in numbers of the two sides. And if we surrender, then all our hope is lost at once, whereas, so long as we remain in action, there is still a hope that we may yet stand upright. (5.102)

LS: In other words, war is a gamble, and the situation may seem hopeless, but you never can tell what will come out. Think of Finland in 1939,[i] and there are other examples . . . And so they refer to their *hopes*, and that gives the theme for the rest of the dialogue. Yes?

Reader:
Athenians: Hope, that comforter in danger! If one already has solid advantages to fall back upon, one can indulge in hope. It may do harm, but will not destroy one. But hope is by nature an expensive commodity, and those who are risking their all on one cast find out what it means only when they are already ruined; it never fails them in the period when such a knowledge would enable them to take precautions. Do not let this happen to you, you who are weak and whose fate depends on a single movement of the scale. And do not be like those people who, as so commonly happens, miss the chance of saving themselves in a human and practical way, and, when every clear and distinct hope has left them in their adversity, turn to what is blind and vague, to prophecies and oracles and such things which by encouraging hope lead men to ruin. (5.103)

LS: In other words, hope has a useful function: one cannot live without hope. But we must make a great distinction between manifest hopes, meaning such hopes the Athenians had in this situation based on the presence of their fleet and *im*manifest hopes, immanifest hopes supported by oracles and such things. And the latter are completely excluded by the Athenians, of course. Yes?

Reader:
Melians: It is difficult, and you may be sure that we know it, for us to oppose your power and fortune, unless the terms be equal. Nevertheless we trust that the gods will give us fortune as good as yours, because we are standing for what is right against what is wrong; and as for what we lack in power, we trust that it will be made up for by our alliance with the Spartans, who are bound, if for no other reason, than for honour's sake, and because we are their kinsmen, to come to our help. (5.104)

LS: Ya, there is one thing which is very wrong in this translation and I suppose also in the sequel: there is no word of the gods. The word used is "the divine," neuter like Latin "divinum," and not gods. Now what is important is this: it is the *Athenians*, not the Melians, who bring up the subject of the divine things. The Melians wouldn't have thought of it! The Melians were the upper-class people—I mean, if I may use such an improper expression, [they were] much too enlightened for this kind of thing. But the Athenians, coming from a democracy . . . they bring it up, but they don't speak of the gods, they speak of the divine. And this is of some importance, the distinction, because when you speak of the gods, you think of Zeus, Hera, Apollo, and so on and so on, but when you speak of the divine, it's very indeterminate. Yes?

Student: I thought it is in 104, it's in that place, it's the Melians who speak of . . .

[i] The Soviet Union invaded Finland in November 1939. The conflict is known as the Winter War. Despite being massively outnumbered and outgunned, the Finns fought the Soviets to a standstill. While compelled to concede much of their eastern province of Karelia, they preserved their sovereignty, unlike the three Baltic states who, similarly confronted with Soviet ultimatums, had agreed to surrender it.

LS: That is true, you're right. I made a mistake. That is true. Ya, I have to correct that. Yes?

Student: But that's encouraged by the Athenians having spoken just of prophecies and oracles. Maybe that's—

LS: Ya, that is true. To that extent, the Melians only use a more general formula of what the Athenians have said.

Student: . . . the Athenians are simply right to speak of these things. They start with the saying about visible things, about facts, they start with this.

LS: Ya, but, still you can . . .

Student: They start with the . . .

LS: Ya, but there are is another fact apart from the gods, and these are the Spartans.

Same Student: But—yes, I understand.

LS: That is also an immanifest hope: Will the Spartans behave as the Melians believe they will behave?

Same Student: Yes, but what I meant to say is that men don't live only by visible facts, and the Melians refer to invisible things in general. Now the question is whether these invisible things are real enough to help intelligence in this case. But in any case the opposition seems to be here that the Athenians stand on facts, namely, suffer what one has to suffer if the power is there. There is . . . In any case, they argue from a different point of view.

LS: Yes, but Thucydides was a very thoughtful man, and he had taken this into consideration, and this doesn't come out here. Later, there was another island which became anti-Athenian during the war, and a very powerful island, the island of Chios. But they *waited*. They didn't start their rebellion when the Athenian navy in its full strength was at their doors. And they waited until the Athenians had been licked in Sicily and some other things had happened, and then they made their rebellion with great success. So in other words, there are immanifest things: Who could have foreseen the Sicilian expedition and its disastrous outcome at that time? And yet it came, and it led to the downfall of Athens. And therefore the Athenians in Melos were shortsighted, that they did not take into consideration what was in store for Athens.

Same Student: Yes, I understand.

LS: I mean, that is strictly dealing with facts. Potential facts are also facts.

Same Student: Yes, I understand this, but for instance the argument, the end of any war is not clear.

LS: Ya, ya. Sure. Sure.

Same Student: In Homer, the god has come down . . .

LS: Sure, sure!

Same Student: In other words—

LS: Sure, and that was said!

Same Student: This is an invisible thing, almost a fact that the war is ambiguous.

LS: Ya, the Greeks had a word for that; they spoke of chance: *tychē* [τύχη], which plays such a role and there may be panics, and a hitherto always successful army is in some strange way defeated—that may happen. But still, you start first from rational considerations. Now let's go on, let's try to finish that. 105, ya?

Reader:
Athenians: So far as the favour of the gods is concerned, we think we have as much right to that as you have. Our aims and our actions are perfectly consistent with the beliefs men hold about the divine and with the principles which govern their own conduct. Our opinion of the divine[ii] and our knowledge of men lead us to conclude that it is a general and necessary law of nature to rule whatever one can. This is not a law that we made ourselves, nor were we the first to act upon it when it was made. We found it already in existence, and we shall leave it to exist for ever among those who come after us. We are merely acting in accordance with it, and we know that you or anybody else with the same power as ours would be acting in precisely the same way. And therefore, so far as the divine[iii] is concerned, we see no good reason why we should fear to be at a disadvantage. But with regard to your views about Sparta and your confidence that she, out of a sense of honour, will come to your aid, we must say that we congratulate you on your simplicity but do not envy you your folly.

LS: In other words, we admire you for your naïveté. That's what they mean. Yes?

Reader:
In matters that concern themselves or their own constitution, the Spartans are quite remarkably good; as for their relations with others, that is a long story, but it can be expressed shortly and clearly by saying that of all people we know the Spartans are most conspicuous for believing that what they like doing is honourable—

LS: Ya, "that the pleasant is, is honorable" or "noble," ya.

Reader:
and what suits their interests is just.

LS: "The expedient is just," ya.

[ii] Warner has "gods."
[iii] Warner has "gods."

Reader:
And this kind of attitude is not going to be of much help to you in your absurd quest for safety at the moment. (5.105)

LS: In other words, your trust in the Spartans is as naïve as your trust in the divine. Both act according to the same principles and both will desert you . . . Ya. Yes?

Reader:
Melians: But this is the very point where we can feel most sure. Their own self-interest will make them refuse to betray their own colonists, the Melians, for that would mean losing the confidence of their friends among the Hellenes and doing good to their enemies. (5.106)

LS: So in other words, the Melians have given up the divine now to Spartans, and the Spartans must for sheer shame, and also because of the racial kindship, come to their help—contrary to what the Athenians have said, that Spartans don't care about other people even if they are of the same stock. Yes?

Reader:
Athenians: You seem to forget that if one follows one's self-interest one wants to be safe, whereas the path of justice and honour involves one in danger. And, where danger is concerned, the Spartans are not, as a rule, very venturesome. (5.107)

LS: So in other words, the Spartans are much too *cautious* to stick their necks out for your sake. So that is not a good hope which you have. Yes?

Reader:
Melians: But we think that they would even endanger themselves for our sake and count the risk more worth taking than in the case of others, because we are so close to the Peloponnese that they could operate more easily, and because they can depend on us more than on others, since we are of the same race and share the same feelings. (5.108)

Athenians: Goodwill shown by the party that is asking for help does not mean security for the prospective ally. What is looked for is a positive preponderance of power in action. And the Spartans pay attention to this point even more than others do. Certainly they distrust their own native resources so much that when they attack a neighbour they bring a great army of allies with them. It is hardly likely therefore that, while we are in control of the sea, they will cross over to an island. (5.109)

LS: So in other words, it is much too great a gamble for these inveterate inlanders, the Spartans, to risk anything as long as Athens rules the waves. Yes?

Reader:
Melians: But they still might send others. The Cretan sea is a wide one, and it is harder for those who control it to intercept others than for those who want to slip through to do so safely. And even if they were to fail in this, they would turn against your own land and against those of your

allies left unvisited by Brasidas. So, instead of troubling about a country which has nothing to do with you, you will find trouble nearer home, among your allies, and in your own country."

LS: So in other words, they appeal to the dangers to which Athens would expose herself, you know, dangers threatening the Athenians on the part of Spartans. And now what is the . . . reply?

Reader:
Athenians: It is a possibility, something that has in fact happened before. It may happen in your case, but you are well aware that the Athenians have never yet relinquished a single siege operation through fear of others. But we are somewhat shocked to find that, though you announced your intention of discussing how you could preserve yourselves, in all this talk you have said absolutely nothing which would justify a man in thinking that he could be preserved. Your chief points are concerned with what you hope may happen in the future, while your actual resources are too scanty to give you a chance of survival against the forces that are opposed to you at this moment. You will therefore be showing an extraordinary lack of common sense if, after you have asked us to retire from this meeting, you still fail to reach a conclusion wiser than anything you have mentioned so far. Do not be led astray by a false sense of honour—a thing which often brings men to ruin when they are faced with an obvious danger that somehow affects their pride. For in many cases men have still been able to see the dangers ahead of them, but this thing called dishonour, this word, by its own force of seduction, has drawn them into a state where they have surrendered to an idea, while in fact they have fallen voluntarily into irrevocable disaster, in dishonour that is all the more dishonourable because it has come to them from their own folly rather than their misfortune. You, if you take the right view, will be careful to avoid this. You will see that there is nothing disgraceful in giving way to the greatest city in Hellas when she is offering you such reasonable terms—alliance on a tribute-paying basis and liberty to enjoy your own property. (5.111)

LS: So in other words, you are in no position to think of your honor, since you fight for your survival; but secondly, there is nothing dishonorable in submitting to a much stronger power, against which there is . . . Yes?

Reader:
And, when you are allowed to choose between war and safety, you will not be so insensitively arrogant as to make the wrong choice. This is the safe rule—to stand up to one's equals, to behave with deference towards one's superiors, and to treat one's inferiors with moderation. Think it over again, then, when we have withdrawn from the meeting, and let this be a point that constantly recurs to your minds—that you are discussing the fate of your country, that you have only one country, and that its future for good or ill depends on this one single decision which you are going to make. (5.111)

The Athenians then withdrew from the discussion. The Melians, left to themselves, reached a conclusion which was much the same as they had indicated in their previous replies. Their answer was as follows— (5.112)

LS: "*About* as follows." Ya.

Reader:
Melians: "Our decision, Athenians, is just the same as it was at first. We are not prepared to give up in a short moment the liberty which our city has enjoyed from its foundation for 700 years. We put our trust in the fortune that the divine[iv] will send and which has saved us up to now, and in the help of men—that is, of the Spartans; and so we shall try to save ourselves. But we invite you to allow us to be friends of yours and enemies to neither side, to make a treaty which shall be agreeable to both you and us, and so to leave our country."

The Melians made this reply, and the Athenians, just as they were breaking off the discussion said about these things[v]— (5.112-13)

LS: Ya, read the Athenian reply.

Reader:
"Well, at any rate, judging from this decision of yours, you seem to us quite unique in your ability to consider the future as something more certain than what is before your eyes—"

LS: Namely, the future of what the gods or the Spartans might do, and what is before your eyes is the Athenian navy. Yes?

Reader:
"and to see uncertainties as realities, simply because you would like them to be so. As you have staked most on and trusted most in Spartans, luck, and hopes, so in all these you will find yourselves most completely deluded." (5.113)

LS: Ya, well, and then finally after some Athenian failures, it ends with the conquest of Melos, the execution of all males who could bear arms, and the sale into slavery of the women and children. That's the end of it, A horrible story, and yet here the Athenians seem to have won. But one must take a longer view and then one sees what happens later: in the example of Chios especially, one sees it had very understandable consequences for Athens. Now this is the story of the Melian Dialogue.

Now the Melian dialogue is one of the two foci of Thucydides's work, the other being Pericles's funeral peech. And just as the funeral speech is followed by the plague, the Melian dialogue is followed by the Sicilian disaster. And there is this build-up, the whole work is built up around this center. Ya. Now this question of course has never ceased to be of concern to mankind from the very time it was brought up first, and it is the oldest document we have apart from certain statements in the tragic authors, is this one, Thucydides, the Melian dialogue. That Thucydides should simply have accepted Machiavellianism, the most unqualified Machiavellianism, as a matter of course, as Max Weber had the audacity to proclaim, that is wrong. Thucydides was as much—[vi] in speeches addressed to the soldiers, the Athenian soldiers, speaks of the gods, not of the divine in general. But Nicias is characterized by Thucydides as a particularly law-abiding man, worshiping the gods according to the laws, and therefore it's perfectly natural that he

[iv] Warner has "gods."
[v] "About these things"is the reader's addition.
[vi] There is a break in the tape at this point.

expresses himself differently than the Melians. Now this subject could lead us to an infinity of other Thucydidean subjects, not to speak of more, but then we might miss some other interesting things in book 5, which, I believe—oh, we still have some time. I would like to say first one thing regarding this thesis "justice is possible only among equals," which is here meant in the first place of course of foreign policy, but it could be applied also to domestic policy because, after all, every individual, however strong and clever, is killable by every other human being, however weak and dumb: the great discovery of Hobbes, as some of you know, and therefore all men are equal. So if there were not this killability, then if there were unkillable men, they would be exempt surely from human justice. But this point leads to, this kind of equality, a sufficient basis of justice—I mean, it may be a *conditio sine qua non*, a negative condition, but it surely is not a positive one.

There is a very remarkable passage somewhere in Nietzsche, who was a great admirer of Thucydides, as you know, and he repeats even Thucydides's thesis occasionally, but there is — Nietzsche, for example, understands justice in this very limited way. I know he did not. But the most telling passage, I couldn't find it again; looking through various works of Nietzsche I couldn't find it. I believe it is somewhere in the *Genealogy of Morals*. It is this story. Nietzsche speaks of early humanity, the various kinds of men, for example, warriors, priests, and so on. And then speaking of priests, he says that they are distinguished by their way of life of course from the warriors, to say nothing of the common people, and what characterizes them is that they are of course not stronger than the warriors, but *cleaner*, cleanlier. And among other things he mentions, they don't sleep with the dirty women from the lowest class of the population. And that is one example. And the expression which he uses, I repeat, I quote from memory, is this kind of thing: not more was what priesthood or saintliness meant. But then he makes a characteristically Nietzschean addition: this not *much* more, i.e., from the very beginning there was an X which the people didn't know, at least which they would have been unable to spell out. And that is the seed of what came, not what is manifest to everyone from the first stage.[vii] And then there is another remark of which one cannot help thinking when speaking of Nietzsche. At the very beginning of[2] [the] first book [of his *Thus Spoke*] *Zarathustra*, there is a speech of Zarathustra about man. I believe I noted that down somewhere. "Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman—a rope over an abyss."[viii] You see? That is so to say the essence of man. And even the lowest form of man, the most barbaric, in one way or the other, this . . . shows. The ancients, say Plato and Aristotle, called that the intellect, the *nous* [νοῦς]. Nietzsche doesn't use that word in this sense, he doesn't mean it. But there is something cardinally distinguishing man from the rest of the earthly beings, and that is clearly indicated by this simile of man as a rope between beast and overman.

Now there are quite a few other passages in the first part of book 5 to which we should pay attention, if this is all right with you, and we begin with chapter 25. I believe we have not read this. Yes? And by the way, by my transition from the Melian dialogue to this, I did not mean to prevent any discussion of the Melian Dialogue, if you are—yes, Mr. Berns?

[vii] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, First Essay, sec. 6.
[viii] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, First Part, Zarathustra's Prologue, sec. 4.

Mr. Berns: Yeah, I'd like to hear a little more about how you connect up what you said . . . from Nietzsche with the problem of justice. We, I mean, would you say that somehow because there is this X, treating human beings the way the Athenians treated the Melians is simply not right.

LS: That was implied, ya. I mean, there are situations in which it may be inevitable, you know? I mean, no empire would permit its destruction at that price. But that was not the point. What is the positive principle, first? Not merely the negative one, like the equality of the two sides . . . must try to find out what it is. But what would be your answer? If you would say, which is also somewhat negative, that not [the] killing of innocent men, how few people after all were responsible for the resistance of Melos to Athens. You know? A considerable part of them, I'm sure, would have said: Let us rather preserve Melos in a state of not very respectable submission rather than having all our males killed and our women and children sold into slavery.

Mr. Berns: But in this particular case—I mean, if I can give a general principle and talk about this particular case, I mean, doesn't one have to go into the problem of honor and freedom, and also the problem of this principle that the Athenians sort of laid down as natural law that the powerful simply demand where they can—

LS: Unless they meet resistance which makes them think twice. That they imply, of course.

Mr. Berns: I mean, one could fault both sides but for different reasons. One can find fault with both sides, but for different reasons.

LS: Ya. Ya, but even if you speak of honor, the great question for Thucydides of course would be: Deserve all men equal honor? And if not, if there is a gradation, there may be a grade of slavery, by which some are fitted. And, as you know, the majority of the Greeks didn't find that slavery was an unjust institution. Some Greeks said it was, but the majority of the Greeks, and some of the greatest Greeks did not. So one would have to fall back then on the discussion of equality and inequality, and whether justice and equality can be identified, which Thucydides surely doesn't say.

Student: . . . if the Melians accepted the Athenian proposal? How likely was it or would it have been for the Melian popular assembly to accept the Athenian proposal?

LS: All we know is what we have read, and obviously the ruling circles of Melos didn't have an implicit faith in the general populace, otherwise they would have said to the Athenians: Try at the popular assembly and see what you think you can achieve there. They prevented that. So there must have been some resistance. And even apart from any evidence, what they call *a priori*, you could assume that quite a few Melians would have said, poor fellows: No, let us surrender, and the Athenians are detestable fellows, but if they let us [stay] alive, that is something. We have seen men acting in all kinds of countries . . .

Student: . . . Would it have been strange if Athens did try to . . . the popular . . .

LS: No, how could they? The only people who could call together a popular assembly were the magistrates. And there was no—how do you say?—no direct democracy. What the people did

simply, guys would stand up on the marketplace and say: Let's have a popular assembly, and let the popular assembly decide about the issue of war and peace—that was excluded by the situation. The Melians were apparently too law-abiding to think of that, assuming that there was a substantial minority or even a small majority in favor of surrender, which we do not know.

Student: I was wondering, I mean, I think lots of people today would be tempted to make the argument that this is a good, sound presentation against all empire. But I don't think that's what Thucydides meant.

LS: No, I don't think so.

Student: And and one wonders whether their empire could not have been a greater empire if it were coupled with more magnanimity.

LS: Ya, but you know that greatness of empire may be conducive to magnanimity. It may also lead to the opposite, it may also lead to a particular hardness of heart. So that is what was said of institutions. Democratic solutions, which were, if they are . . . something like the League of Nations or however it may be called today, but we have seen that this is not a cure. Think of what is happening now in Vietnam: no one can swear that this arrangement made between this country and Vietnam will last. It has doubtless done some good to this country, to the inner peace in this country, but whether the North Vietnamese will abide by this—you know? And in Korea there are still forty-three thousand Americans, if I remember.[ix] Surely, if there could be a universal state, by definition there would be no war, but universal states have other defects. In universal states, you cannot escape from the government. When you have a variety of states and the government is too beastly, you can at least try to run away. You cannot try to run away from a universal empire.

Student: You can emigrate.

LS: Pardon?

Student: You can emigrate.

LS: Well, you know from the daily papers that this is not true. You can emigrate if that government permits you to emigrate, which means in plain English you cannot emigrate. [Laughter] Oh—ya?

Student: You said that the standard for the behavior of the Melians, what the island of Chios did, I mean . . . island of Chios?

LS: Ya.

Student: Now they seem to have been more cautious or more prudent—

[ix] Strauss refers to the number of U.S. troops stationed in South Korea to maintain the armistice that had ended the Korean War in 1953.

LS: Ya.

Same Student: than the Melians.

LS: Oh, ya.

Student: But can one say that they were, they behaved rightly, that the Melians ought to have behaved . . .

LS: In Thucydides's view, I believe, yes. Thucydides would have thought highly of prudence, because he would not have accepted the low view of prudence, namely, as mere low, cunning calculation of the person. He would have said that it is the duty, especially of the government, or of the authority of people in the community to be prudent.

Student: But the people of Chios could not have known that the Athenians would suffer the reverse that they did.

LS: Therefore they waited until it was reasonably sure. And in addition, there was another reason which Thucydides gives. The Chians had one quality in common with the Spartans: they were very rich and had a very large slave population. Now if you have a large slave population and make war, there will be a great running away of slaves from their legal owners to the enemy. And that makes the slave-owners more or less peaceful. That happened in Sparta, it happened in Chios. And when they saw there was no chance for the slaves anymore, so that they would run away, the property, so that their property was secure, they raised the flag of rebellion with success.

Student: Are you saying that the same is true of Melos?

LS: No! Melos didn't have this slave problem. There were no helots on Melos.

Same Student: Well, then the question is: Not knowing that the Athenians would suffer such a reverse, since it is dependent on chance or the divine, how are we to judge the rightness of the action of the Melians?

LS: Ya, well, then you have to submit for the time being, you have to keep alive the memory of lost freedom and the hope for its restoration. There are various ways in which this can be done. In all countries, there are songs and stories which can be transmitted to future generations. But there may be times—generations—in which nothing can be done.

Student: . . .

LS: Ya, by the whole book, I believe. I mean, Thucydides saw the nobility of the actions of the Melians, but it was in Thucydides's opinion also an unwise nobility.

Student: Doesn't Thucydides say somewhere that to submit to the greatest city is not dishonorable?

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: Doesn't Thucydides somewhere simply say that to submit to the greatest city is not dishonorable?

LS: Ya, in here! No, no, sure. It's the Athenians[x]—ya, but there is a certain element of truth in that.[xi]

Student: Yeah, but I think, I think that, that Thucydides—

Student: You mentioned earlier the example of Finland. I don't remember it too well, but isn't that a case where a very small country decided it would be better to fight?

LS: Yes, but that—you know the situation: Stalin had murdered the Russian military leaders, the Red Army was in the state of complete disarray, and therefore the Red Army was not able to fight until it was completely reorganized. No one could see—one does not know the reason. One explanation is that a Nazi called Heydrich, who was in control of Czechoslovakia at that time,[xii] had fabricated reports of secret connections between the Russian General Staff, especially Tukhachevsky or what his name was,[xiii] and the Nazis; and therefore Stalin felt it was absolutely necessary to cut their throats and to disorganize the Red Army. And you know how long it took them until they could build up an army again, a few years. The Germans would never have come so deep into Russia if the Red Army had been in the proper shape. So surely that is possible, and there are other things possible; for example, Salamis, at their doorsteps, where the Athenians defeated the Persians in an unexpected way because they had this remarkable man Themistocles and this remarkable willingness of Athens to sacrifice their city in order to keep her free. But they brought then their women and children to Euboea and the men all have to go on the boats in order to defeat the Persian navy under particularly favorable conditions, particularly favorable to the Athenians. You wanted to say—?

Student: I was just going to ask, after what the Athenians say at the beginning of their speech about the specious arguments they've used in the past, that they're not going to use them now, about justice? They're not going to make any specious arguments.

LS: Ya, ya. In other words, they say we don't have a moral right to do that.

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[x] Thucydides 5.111.4.

[xi] Strauss is interrupted more than once by the questioner, whose comments are difficult to make out.

[xii] Reinhard Heydrich (1904-1942) served as Heinrich Himmler's chief lieutenant in the SS. He was charged by Hermann Göring with carrying out a "final solution to the Jewish question," and chaired the Wannsee Conference in 1942. Heydrich became governor of Bohemia and Moravia in 1941and promptly instituted a reign of terror there. He was assassinated by Czech partisans in June 1942. Strauss is therefore in error: whatever Heydrich's possible role in deceiving Stalin in 1937 (about which more recent historians have disagreed), he was not yet the governor of Czechoslovakia at that time.

[xiii] Mikhail N. Tukhachevsky (1893-1937), Soviet hero of the Russian civil war and Marshal of the Soviet Union, the most prominent of the nine Soviet generals convicted of treason on Stalin's orders and shot on June 11, 1937.

Student: I just wondered whether we are supposed to, from now on, when we hear the Athenians speak, if they argue about justice, if we're supposed to look at that a little bit differently. I mean, it gave me the opinion that the Athenians just use arguments about justice when they're expedient. That's—

LS: Ya, well, they are not—there is not such a great difference between the Athenians and Spartans in this respect. It is more subtle. For example, what the Athenians, led by Cleon, wanted to do to Mytilene was exactly what the Thebans, with Spartan approval, did to the Plataeans. Only in Athens there was a tiny majority in favor of not executing all men, and by some fantastic action of the Athenian sailors, the Mytilenaeans were saved at the last moment. The Athenians were a bit more humane than the Spartans, there is no doubt about that, but they were no angels. Ya, Mr. . . . ?

Student: In at least one place when the Athenian speaker is—and state that it is the right of the stronger to overcome the weaker, they speak of this as a law of nature, and I think in Callicles's speech, he also speaks of a law of nature. I don't know about the significance—

LS: There is no law of nature here, that is the addition of the translator. But that is natural, ya, that the big fishes eat the small ones, applied to human beings.

Same Student: I thought I'm not sure about here, but I thought in the *Gorgias* . . .

LS: No, I don't think so. Look it up. It does occur, *nomos tēs physeôs* [νόμος τῆς φύσεως].

Same Student: The thing is an exceptional use, but . . .

LS: Ya. The word occurs according to my recollection twice in Plato, once in the *Gorgias*, used by Callicles, of course, not by Socrates, and once in the *Timaeus*,[xiv] but nowhere else.

Student: But that's what he's referring to, used by Callicles.

LS: Oh, you referred to the *Gorgias*?

Student: Well, I was just wondering if there was something exceptional about the statement that the stronger . . . the weaker that makes it emphatically, that seems to require the combination of, or sometimes the coming together of *nomos* and *physis* [νόμος and φύσις]. I guess it doesn't occur here.

LS: Ya, but that is a long question. Then we would have to have first an analysis of Callicles and know what prompts him. And I believe that the striking difference between Callicles and the Athenians on Melos is this, and therefore Calicles has a certain attractiveness. I believe that the fundamental motive of Callicles is a very respectable one: he simply cannot stand the thought that a man like Socrates should be unable to defend himself against such crooks as Anytus, Meletus, and so on, and therefore the just men must arm themselves and fight against evil before

[xiv] Plato *Timaeus* 83a*, Gorgias* 484c.

it becomes too strong. And that is a motive which we all know and which is not the lowest motive human beings can have. But what Socrates in the *Gorgias* means is this: this seemingly harmless thing can very well become the root of all evil, or in the language of the New Testament, Do not resist evil. That is at least something, a thought which was not absent from Socrates's mind. To punish the evildoers, actual or potential, is inevitable, but it is also a kind of poison and to draw the right line there is very hard. And the temptation to be punitive is very strong, and I believe every one of us has had it from time to time, but all the more necessary to watch it. I say to watch it, not to extricate it, because there are limits which will be reached sooner or later, where even maybe the Supreme Court of the United States will have second thoughts about capital punishment. Yes?

Student: Would that make the positive side of justice to be something such as humaneness? That you suggested, you said, that humaneness—the Athenians were a bit more humane than the Spartans.

LS: Ya.

Student: Could that be the positive side?

LS: You can put it—one would have to say, of course, what humaneness means. But the example we have read was that Spartan Alcidas, the Spartan general, when he caught—in the war when he made prisoners [of] allies of the Athenians. First thing: Hang them! That this would be the best means for preventing any non-Spartan from getting caught by the Athenians, this obvious notion had not occurred to the Spartan Alcidas. So that you see here you have here a link between humanness and reasonable calculation. Why make . . . people increase the number of your enemies unnecessarily? There is some—I mean, that is a simple truth in so-called utilitarianism, which has so many meanings, but generally speaking, it pays to be a bit more reasonable, mild, or gentle. And the man who is inaccessible to that thought, is he an enemy of . . . That one can say. Now let us read chapter 25.

Reader:
After the peace treaty and the alliance between Sparta and Athens, made after the ten years' war, when Pleistolas was ephor in Sparta and Alcaeus archon in Athens, there was peace so far as those who had accepted the terms were concerned. But Corinth and various other cities in the Peloponnese were trying to upset the agreement, and Sparta found herself immediately in fresh trouble with her allies. (5.25)

LS: So in other words, there was peace and yet there's trouble, a situation which even the present generation is familiar with. Ya? Yes?

Reader:
Then, too, as time went on the Spartans also lost the confidence of the Athenians because they failed to carry out some of the terms of the treaty. It is true that for six years and ten months they refrained from invading each other's territory; abroad, however, the truce was never properly in force, and each side did the other a great deal of harm, until finally they were forced to break the treaty made after the ten years, and once more declare war openly upon each other. (5.25)

LS: Ya, this was the cold war period which lasted for some years, and then it began again. Yes, the next chapter?

Reader:
The history of this period also has been written by the same Thucydides, an Athenian, keeping to the order of events as they happened by summers and winters, down to the time when the Spartans and their allies put an end to the empire of Athens and occupied the Long Walls and Piraeus. By then the war—

LS: So in other words, Thucydides's work saw the destruction of the Athenian empire, there can be no doubt about it, although he did not describe it. Whether this was due to his premature death or to artistic consideration, the same considerations which prevented Homer from describing the destruction of Troy, that is, we don't know. Yes? Go on.

Reader:
By then the war had lasted altogether twenty-seven years. And it would certainly be an error of judgement to consider the interval of the agreement as anything else except a period of war. One has only to look at the facts to see that it is hardly possible to use the word 'peace' of a situation in which neither side gave back or received what had been promised; and apart from this there were breaches of the treaty on both sides in connection with the Mantinean and Epidaurian wars, and in other respects, too; the allies in the Thracian area continued hostile as before; and the Boeotians were in a state of truce which had to be renewed every ten days. So, if one puts together the first ten years' war, the uneasy truce which followed, and the subsequent war, one will find, reckoning by summers and winters, that my estimate of the number of years is correct within a few days—also that, for those who put their faith in oracles, here is one solitary instance of their having been proved accurate. (5.26)

LS: So there was one oracle which proved to be correct, or roughly correct, that the war would last twenty-seven years. Yes?

Reader:
I myself remember that all the time from the beginning to the end of the war it was being put about by many people that the war would last for thrice nine years. I lived through the whole of it, being of an age to understand what was happening, and I put my mind to the subject so as to get an accurate view of it. It happened, too, that I was banished from my country for twenty years after my command at Amphipolis; I saw what—

LS: To which he had only alluded when he spoke of the battle . . . Amphipolis.

Reader:
I saw what was being done on both sides, particularly on the Peloponnesian side, because of my exile, and this leisure gave me rather exceptional facilities for looking into things. I shall now, therefore, go on to describe the disputes that took place after the ten years' war, the breach of the treaty, and the warfare which came afterwards. (5.26)

LS: Ya, this section which we have read is known as the second preface. It's indeed a new preface; whether there are not some more prefaces in Thucydides's *History* is another matter. I would like to draw your attention to another little thing. Thucydides was exiled because of this failure to save Amphipolis, an important Athenian armed place in the north, and this gave him the opportunity to spend a large part of the second war in the Peloponnesian world, and so he had first-hand knowledge of the goings-on there.

And now the following thing, for which I have not yet laid the proper foundation because we have not read the passages. It will come out in book 7 that the Spartans believed that they had lost the first war because they had broken the treaty, i.e., solemnly-sworn treaties, but in the second part of the war, which began in 415, the Spartans were absolutely sure that the Athenians had broken the treaty, that Athens was the aggressor, and therefore they had hopes that they would win, hopes which proved to be correct. Now let us make these parallels and make an application to Thucydides. When he was on the Athenian side, as it were, some time as a general, while Athens was in the wrong,[xv] and he was on the Spartan side when Sparta was in the right. So Thucydides finally at least was on the right side and symbolizes the presence or absence of justice.

Now let me see. Ya, well, there is a long discussion of the peace treaties and their obscurities which led to the fact that there never was a true war.[xvi] And the details are of course important, but we must make selections, we cannot help that. There was one point which I believe—ya, I think we have no more time to do that. There comes a very interesting story about the battle of Mantinea, a battle [3]between Sparta and Argos, where Sparta wins in a wholly un-Spartan manner, and that story verges on the comic. I believe we should not now read that—we should read it, but today it is late. But there was a time I used to call that section about the battle of Mantinea the Spartan comedy, in contrast to the Athenian tragedy on Sicily. The Spartans acted against all their principles in that battle and won. And one particularly funny thing is this, which Thucydides mentions I believe in that context, that owing to—the Spartans were very secretive people, and it was impossible to make a right estimate of the number of their fighters because of the funny arrangement of the armies. But once you got the principle, as Thucydides did, it was easy to calculate how many fighters the Spartans had. Now what do the other cities [do]? The other cities, they are not secretive but they boast. And this boast deceives the people who believe the boasts, and that is probably most people, so that such an irrational practice as boasting may be more rational than the strange rationality of the Spartans. Well, I think we will read it next time. Do you want to say something?

Dr. Kass: In a way on the subject of boasting. You said earlier that the plague is somehow Thucydides's answer by juxtaposition to the funeral oration as the Sicilian expedition is to the Melian dialogue. In the first instance Pericles boasts of Athenian honor, and in the second instance the Athenians boast of the absence of honor, or at least have a different notion of honor. Doesn't Thucydides have a different view about boasting? Isn't this what makes the two things common, not so much the content of the speeches, but in a way the presumption and arrogance?

[xv] Strauss here misspeaks, contradicting his own assertion (repeated in this very passage) that Athens had been in the right during the first half of the war.

[xvi] Strauss evidently meant to say that there had never been a true peace.

LS: Ya, sure, I would— by boasting I meant here something very limited. I say that these people say: At Mantinea, whatever the citizens say, we have so and so many hoplites, so and so many horsemen, and so on and so on. And simply, they speak about their numbers untruthfully, exaggerating them, and therefore in this way they deceive people without having the *intention* necessarily to deceive. There is in the two other cases . . . not that Pericles didn't have an intention, or the Athenians on Melos didn't have an intention, but it was not the intention to deceive but the intention to encourage the Athenians to wage the war in the case of Pericles, and the intention of the Athenian ambassadors on Melos to make the Melians despair . . . But sure, boasting was generally regarded as something not very nice. The term "boaster" is a term of reproach. Someone who wants to be more than he is, ya? For example, Socrates is called a boaster in Aristophanes because of the way in which he dresses, as it were, he doesn't wear shoes, and claiming to know things of which he knows nothing, that's called boasting.[xvii]

Dr. Kass: Just one further word. It's not clear to me from the Melian dialogue whether what's reprehensible about what the Athenians did is what they did or what they said. That is, it seems to me that if one would consider simply the fact that the Melians were their enemy and this was a condition of war, maybe they were a bit brutal in the end, but—

LS: Quite a bit.

Student: Yes. But is it that or is it the way in which they have spoken?

LS: Ya, that may seem, of course, particularly offensive. But you must not forget, [the] offensiveness of the speech was prepared by fact that even Pericles had spoken of the fact that Athens exercises tyrannical rule over these cities, and no other speech of Athenians equals them. Later on, when they're already in Sicily and there's an assembly there of Sicilian delegates, there is an Athenian who repeats this kind of thing but in a much milder form, much more reduced form. And this Athenian, in Camarina I believe it was, has the name Euphemus, which is akin to euphemism. In other words, he was reduced to euphemism by the—[xviii]

[xvii] Aristophanes, *Clouds* 102.
[xviii] The tape ends at this point.

Session 11: no date
Book 5, chapters 59-end; book 6, chapters 1-13

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —and we have to reconsider a certain passage regarding which there was dissension between me and Mr. Berns, and I believe I gave in too easily. It concerns section 103. Will you be so kind as to have another look at it? 103, the Athenians speaking.

Reader:
Athenians: Hope, that comforter in danger! If one already has solid advantages to fall back upon, one can indulge in hope. It may do harm, but will not destroy one. But hope is by nature an expensive commodity, and those who are risking their all on one cast find out what it means only when they are already ruined;—

LS: "Commodity" is an addition of the translator, that was not a capitalist . . . Thucydides, who thought of hope in terms of commodities. Hope is by nature spendthrifty, a spendthrift. Yes?

Reader:
it never fails them in the period when such a knowledge would enable them to take precautions. Do not let this happen to you, you who are weak and whose fate depends on a single movement of the scale. And do not be like those people who, as so commonly happens, miss the chance of saving themselves in a human and practical way, and, when every clear and distinct hope has left them in their adversity, turn to what is blind and vague, to prophesies and oracles and such things which by encouraging hope lead men to ruin. (5.103)

LS: Ya, now what was the point of difference? I had said that the whole issue of the gods came in only through the Athenians; the Melians only replied to it. And Mr. Berns cannot deny that. But the question is: Did the Athenians bring it up? And there was a slight difference of opinion. I would now put it this way. They mention it only in passing, as something which no sensible man would ever consider, and therefore one can—my overstatement that it was not really brought up by anybody is somewhat nearer to the truth than what Mr. Berns said. That is my proposal. Good. There is something—ya, the point which I made then, and which is confirmed by the rest of the dialogue, is that no one speaks of the gods but only of the divine, which is much vaguer but also not exposed to the great difficulties to which general Greek polytheism was exposed, since you don't know which god is responsible or not. This led me, at least, to a kind of question which I had never done, and as far as I know no one has noticed that, namely, what does Thucydides *precisely* say about the gods? I mean, we are of course aware of the question. But point by point analysis of the passage with a fine comb I hadn't made before, and I have begun to do that. I came only up to a certain point last week and I will not withhold from you—far from it—the provisional results of my inquiries.

But before we turn to that, we should read a passage in the fifth book which has nothing directly to do with that but which we cannot possibly neglect, and that is chapter 58, paragraph 4. That concerns conflict between Sparta and Argos, two cities who had been allies in the first part of the war and became enemies in that cold sar between the two parts of the war. And we cannot

possibly read the whole, but let us read, begin at chapter 58.4, when he speaks of King Agis of Sparta. Ya?

Reader:
Agis, however, broke camp in the night without being observed and went on to Phlius, where he joined the other allies. At dawn the Argives saw what had happened and marched first to Argos and then to the Nemean road, which was the route by which they expected that the Spartans and their allies would come down from the mountains. Agis, however, did not take the road they expected. He gave marching orders to the Spartans, Arcadians, and Epidaurians, and, going by another difficult road, made his way down into the plain of Argos. The Corinthians, Pellenians, and Phliasians marched by another steep road. The Boeotians, Megarians, and Sicyonians were ordered to come down by the Nemean road, where the Argives were posted, so that, if the Argives went down to the plain to oppose Agis and his troops, they might fall upon them from the rear with their cavalry. After making these arrangements, Agis made his way into the plain and began to lay waste Saminthus and other places.

Realizing what had happened, the Argives left Nemea and came to meet him. It was now day. On their route they came in contact with the army of the Phliasians and the Corinthians, and killed a few of the Phliasians, losing a slightly greater number of their own men at the hands of the Corinthians. Meanwhile the Boeotians, Megarians, and Sicyonians were marching onto Nemea, according to their instructions. Here they found that the Argives were no longer holding their positions; instead they had gone down into the plain, where they saw their property being destroyed, and were now forming up in order of battle, with the Spartans also forming up against them. In fact the Argives were hemmed in on all sides. On the plain they were cut off from their city by the Spartans and the troops with them; on the hills above them were the Corinthians, Phliasians, and Pellenians; and in the direction of Nemea were the Boeotians, Sicyonians, and Megarians. They had no cavalry, since the Athenians, alone of their allies, had not yet arrived.

The greater part of the army of the Argives and their allies, so far from realizing how dangerous their position was, thought that they were going to fight on very favourable conditions, with the Spartans cut off in their own country close to their city. (5.59)

LS: You see quite new situations. The Spartans, whose strength was in their infantry, heavy infantry, were in an unfavorable condition, and so that a weaker city like Argos had a fair chance of victory. That was a new thing. Yes? What does Agis do with that?

Reader:
However, there were two men among the Argives (Thrasylus, who was one of the five generals, and Alciphron, who represented Spartan interests at Argos) who thought differently. Just as the armies were on the point of meeting, these two went forward, held a conference with Agis, and urged him not to bring on a battle, saying that the Argives were prepared to submit to fair and equal arbitration any complaints that Sparta had to make against them, and to make a treaty and live in peace for the future. In saying this they spoke entirely for themselves, with no authority from the mass of the army. Agis, too, in accepting their proposals, acted on his own responsibility, and did not even discuss the question with the majority. He took into his confidence only one man among the high officers who were serving with him, and made a truce

for four months, in the course of which time the Argives were expected to carry out what they had promised. He then immediately led his army off, giving no explanation to any of his other allies.

The Spartans and their allies followed the leadership of Agis, as they were bound to do by law, but they blamed him bitterly among themselves. There had been, they thought, a most excellent opportunity for joining battle, with the enemy surrounded on every side by infantry and cavalry, and now they were going away without having done anything worthy of the great strength they had. This was indeed the finest Hellenic army that had ever been brought together, and it was seen at its best while it was still in one united force at Nemea. The Spartans were there with their whole army—the Arcadians, Boeotians, Corinthians, Sicyonians, Pellenians, Phliasians, and Megarians, all with picked troops; in fact a force that looked as though it could hold its own not only against the Argive League but against another such League in addition. As it was, the army retreated, putting the blame, as we have seen, on Agis, and the various contingents returned to their own states. (5.59-60)

LS: You see an amazing situation: victory available, and the King of Sparta, the commander of the Peloponnesian army, making an armistice, an act of obvious treason. You see: what's the matter? That is the situation. And now let us—we cannot read that; let us turn to chapter 63.

Reader:

The Spartans, returned from Argos after making the four months' truce, were extremely indignant with Agis for not having conquered Argos when he had had such an opportunity as, they thought, had never occurred before; since it was by no means easy to bring together so many allied troops of such a high quality. But when news arrived of the capture of Orchomenus they were still more infuriated and, carried away by passion in a manner quite unlike themselves, were in favour of pulling down the house of Agis immediately and fining him 10,000 drachmae. Agis, however, begged them not to do so, and promised that when he had taken the field again he would atone for his faults by some noble action; if not, they could do with him what they liked. They therefore gave up the idea of fining him and of demolishing his house, and for the time being made a law which had never existed in Sparta previously, to the effect that ten Spartans of the officer class should be chosen to act with him as advisers, and that without their authority he should not be empowered to lead an army out of the city. (5.63)

LS: You see an extraordinary thing: a constitutional change in Sparta because of the seeming untrustworthiness of the Spartan king—you know that there were in Sparta always two kings, [he is] one of the two kings. And I hope that those of you who have an opportunity consult occasionally a map of ancient Greece so that things become a bit more intelligible and lively. It's not very easy, because there were not many big towns, and there—in this French edition which I have there are very good maps, but I suppose Marchant has also—or you use . . . Good.

Now what happened with this new law, this radical innovation of the Spartan constitution? Let us go on.

Reader:

Meanwhile news came to them from their friends in Tegea, who said that, unless they came quickly, Tegea would go over from them to Argos and her allies; in fact, it was already on the point of doing so. Now at last the Spartans moved quickly and came to the help of Tegea with their entire force both of citizens and helots in greater numbers than on any other occasion.

LS: "In a different way, a different quality than ever before," also an innovation. Yes?

Reader:
They advanced to Orestheum in Maenalia and ordered the Arcadians who were in alliance with them to mobilize and follow in their tracks to Tegea. They themselves went as far as Orestheum with their whole army, and from there sent back a sixth part of the Spartans, consisting of the oldest and youngest troops, to guard their homes. They arrived at Tegea with the rest of their forces, and were soon joined there by their Arcadian allies. (5.64)

LS: Ya, let us go over to the second paragraph of the next chapter, 65. Second sentence, "The Spartans."

Reader:
The Spartans immediately advanced against them, and came up as close as a stone's throw or a javelin's cast. At this point one of the older men in the army, seeing that they were advancing against such a strong position, shouted out to Agis that he was trying to cure one evil with another, meaning by this that he was wanting to make up for the retreat from Argos, for which he had been blamed, by now courting danger at the wrong time. (5.65)

LS: You see, he was a man of this newly appointed kind of officers who were to be the watchdogs of the king, and so he acted perfectly in his right by interfering with the proposed action of the Spartan king. Yes?

Reader:
Agis, whether because of what the old soldier had shouted out or because he himself had suddenly changed his mind, quickly led his army back again before it had come to actual fighting. Going into the territory of Tegea, he began to divert the water from there into the territory of Mantinea. This water is a constant cause of fighting between the Tegeans and the Mantineans— (5.65)

LS: We don't need that. Chapter 66, paragraph 2.

Reader:

It was a moment when the Spartans were more startled than they could ever remember having been before. They had only the shortest possible time for getting ready, and each man took up his position with the utmost speed and alacrity, Agis, their King, giving the necessary orders, according to the law.

LS: "According to the law." He returns to the old order and has no trust in these new constitutional devices. A strange man, and very un-Spartan. Now let us turn to chapter 68.

Reader:
The arrangement and composition of the two armies were as above. The Spartan army looked the bigger, but it would be impossible for me to give the exact numbers either of the whole armies or of the various divisions on each side. The secrecy with which their affairs are conducted meant that no one knew the number of the Spartans, and for the—

LS: You see, that is Sparta: the old-fashioned, reactionary Sparta which keeps everything undercover, and no one knows the numbers and so, but what about the other side? The allies of the Spartans who were not so reactionary.

Reader:
and for the rest it was impossible to rely on the estimates given, since it is human nature to boast about the size of one's own forces.

LS: So in other words, you see they had no laws forbidding the divulging of numbers, but they *boast*, an unregulated and unregimented form of concealment, and it's—go on.

Reader:
The following method of calculation, however, makes it possible to estimate the numbers of Spartans engaged on this occasion. Not counting the Sciritae, who were 600 in all, there were seven regiments fighting in the battle. In each regiment there were four companies, and in each company four platoons. Four men fought in the front rank of each platoon; in depth the arrangement was not the same throughout, but depended on the decision of the commanders of the regiments; on the whole, though, they were drawn up eight deep. The first rank, along the whole line, not counting the Sciritiae, consisted of 448 men.

LS: So in other words, Thucydides beats the Spartans by being a good calculator, whereas he couldn't have done this and confronted with inflated numbers, inflated by boasting. So that is not very helpful. So, chapter 70.

Reader:
After this the two armies met, the Argives and their allies advancing with great violence and fury, while the Spartans came on slowly and to the music of many flute-players in their ranks. This custom of theirs has nothing to do with religion; it is designed—

LS: Ya, "not for the sake of the divine." Yes?

Reader:
It is designed so as to make them keep in step and move forward steadily without breaking their ranks, as large armies often do when they are just about to join battle.

LS: Ya. Chapter 72, paragraph 2.

Reader:

Certainly, so far as skill in manoeuvering goes, the Spartans had had the worst of it in every respect, but certainly they now showed that in courage they had no equals.

LS: So because of the innovation, no experience in this way of arranging troops, no wonder that they were unskilled. But their bravery decided and brought about their victory. Yes? Go on.

Reader:
Once the fighting began, the Mantinean right broke through the Spartan Sciritae and the troops who had been under Brasidas. Then the Mantineans, with their allies and the thousand picked troops of Argos, swept into the gap in the Spartan line that had still not been filled up. Here they surrounded the Spartans, killed many of them, and drove them right back as far as their wagons, where they killed some of the older men who were on guard there. (5.72)

LS: Ya, let us stop here and turn to chapter 75, paragraph 3, roughly the middle of chapter 75.

Reader:
On the day before this battle the Epidaurians took advantage of the fact that the territory of Argos was left undefended, and invaded it in full force, killing many of the guards who had been left behind when the main Argive army had marched away.

After the battle 3,000 hoplites from Elis arrived as reinforcements to the Mantineans and also 1,000 Athenians, in addition to the force already there. All these allies immediately marched on Epidaurus, while the Spartans were celebrating the Carnean festival, and, sharing the work out among themselves, began to build a wall around the city. Though the others gave it up, the Athenians quickly completed the part assigned to them, which was round Cape Heraeum. They all left detachments to form a garrison for this fortification and then dispersed to their various cities. So the summer ended.

LS: Ya, there was a passage which we—no, a little before you, in chapter 75 you began to read; there is a sentence how the victory in Mantinea, this wholly unorthodox Spartan victory at Mantinea, affected the Greeks.

Reader:
So by this one action they did away with all the reproaches that had been leveled against them by the Hellenes at this time, whether for cowardice, because of the disaster in the island, or for incompetence and lack of resolution on other occasions. It was now thought that, though they might have been cast down by fortune, they were still in their own selves the same as they always had been. (5.75)

LS: Now what is the island of which he speaks, and which had ruined the Spartans' reputation? Sphacteria. Pylos. And so this was unheard of, a victory of other Greeks over the Spartans. That was number one. Then there came the terrific expedition of Brasidas to the north, which culminated in the battle of Amphipolis, in which both Brasidas and Cleon fell, and then led to the Peace of Nicias. Did the victories of Brasidas not restore the prestige of Sparta? Answer: No! That was not—Brasidas was of course a Spartan, but his army was not regarded as a Spartan army. These were the so-called Brasideans, the corps, the "free corps," as they were called in

Germany after the First World War, which Brasidas had assembled on his own initiative, and the Spartan government did have—they tolerated it, and they derived some benefit from it, but that was not Spartan. So this fantastic story of the battle of Mantinea, which restores the prestige of Sparta, was achieved in a wholly unorthodox way by a Spartan king who was not completely above suspicion of treachery; and he did it, and all kinds of changes were made, we have seen, against the ancient law. And this is the kind of premonition [of] which changes Sparta might still be willing to undergo, if necessary, but for which we have found no traces yet. I believe I mentioned this last time, I called this story the Spartan comedy because of course this was a very bloody comedy, but blood and non-blood is not the difference between tragedy and comedy. But it contradicts everything which we were told, here and elsewhere, about Sparta. And then Sparta won in the end of the war, by very unorthodox means, by sending a land army and a navy to Sicily, of which we will hear later. So I thought we should not disregard this remarkable passage. Ya.

Now this is all I thought we should or could read in book 5, and now we turn to book 6. But is there any point you would like to discuss first? Oh, yes! I'm sorry—I didn't keep my promise! What has become of me! This story about the gods, you remember, which was the subject was brought up by Mr. Berns, or by Mr. Berns and me too, and our enmity. Good. Now I will tell you of my observations regarding the first two books. Of what comes later I have some inkling, but I don't know. The starting point was that in the Melian dialogue, the gods were not mentioned but only the divine. Good. Now the book, as you remember, begins with a twofold proof of the bigness of the Peloponnesian War. First proof: the Archaeology, the weakness of the ancients and the corresponding strength of the present. A very long proof, nineteen chapters. Nothing is said about the gods. The second proof: the greatness of the sufferings, the sufferings which the Greeks inflicted on one another during the Peloponnesian War were much bigger than the sufferings inflicted on them by the Persians in the Persian War, to say nothing of the Trojans in the Trojan War. Now these sufferings, of which he speaks in chapter 23, are tacitly divided into two groups: those which human beings inflict on one another, battle and so on; and those which are inflicted by something else, for example, earthquakes, famine, the plague, eclipses of the sun, which were not real sufferings but were thought to be announcements of sufferings and therefore were indirectly sufferings. So I suggest, although Thucydides doesn't make the distinction here, a distinction of sufferings into human sufferings, humanly-originating sufferings, and demonic sufferings, leaving "demonic" in ambiguity: [it] may mean of gods, stemming from gods, and may mean also anything superhuman, not subject to human power, so approaching the meaning of what we call natural. But as I said, the term "god," or "demons" and so on, is not used.

This is what we see in what we call the introduction. And now we come to the text itself, and the first couple of speeches, the Corcyreans and the Corinthians in Athens, chapter 32 to 43 in the first book: no reference whatever to gods or sacred things. The situation with Corinth, however, is somewhat more complex. In the four speeches delivered in Sparta by the Corinthians, Athenians, the Spartan King Archidamus, and the ephor Sthenelaidas, chapter 68 to 86. The Corinthians, as you may recall, are the accusers *par excellence* of the Athenians, and they appeal more emphatically to the gods, who watch over the performance of oaths, than any other speakers do. The only speaker here of these four speakers here who is completely silent about the gods is Archidamus, the Spartan king—the only speaker here whom Thucydides has dignified by an epithet of praise, if a somewhat qualified one. He says: He was thought to be a sensible man

and a moderate man. Nothing of this kind is said of any of the other speakers here. Now a short while later there is another assembly of the Peloponnesians, which again takes place in Sparta. There occurs there only a single speech, delivered by the Corinthians. In that speech, the Corinthians refer to the oracle of the god. Again the Corinthians, the accusers. There follows Thucydides's narrative of the final exchanges which deal chiefly with mutual recriminations regarding ritual pollutions committed either by the Athenians or by the Spartans. Thucydides refrains from judging on the merits of the two cases. He merely notes that the Spartans held that their pollution, polluting action, was responsible for the big earthquake that hit Sparta. That was a Spartan opinion; we have no reason to assume that it was Thucydides's opinion. That is chapter 128.

Thucydides's account of the final fate of the Spartan and the Athenian leaders in the Persian War, namely, of King Pausanias and of Themistocles, contains literal quotations from the letters of the two men to the King of Persia, i.e., something approaching speeches by Thucydidean characters, not Thucydides speaking, but his characters speaking. Those quotations contain no references to gods, because they submit the Persian king's plans for betraying Greece, and the Persians didn't believe in the Greek gods and vice versa. On the other hand, the god in Delphi, Apollo, had a weighty word to say about the fitting burial of the Spartan king after he had been starved to death as punishment for this treachery, but after all, he was a Spartan king, a descendant from Heracles, and Heracles being a son of Zeus, so you couldn't bury him like any ordinary traitor. And [1]Apollo took a hand in it.

Now we are prepared for considering the next speeches, and these are the speeches by Pericles, one at the end of book 1; second, the funeral speech; and third, the final speech, book 2, chapter 60 to 64. Pericles is as completely silent on the gods as Archidamus. Footnote: Once in the funeral speech he refers in passing to sacrifices, but the sacrifices are simply part of the festivities of Athens which make Athens such a gay city. That's all that it means in the context. Archidamus remains for the time being unchanged. Before the first invasion of Attica through the Peloponnesian army led by Archidamus, Archidamus addresses a speech to the supreme commanders without ever referring to the gods, chapter 11 of book 2. Yet in a Periclean speech, addressed to the Athenian popular assembly, not merely to commanders, a speech which Thucydides reports without claiming to quote it, he makes Pericles speak of "quote the goddess." Now he means by the goddess the most valuable statue of the Pallas Athena on the Acropolis, for Thucydides is assessing there in detail the financial resources of the city of Athens, and the monetary value of that statue is a major item. That's chapter 13.

On the other hand, however, Thucydides has to say quite a few things about gods and sacred matters in his narrative of the plague in his narrative that are not speeches. And of course also in his narrative about early Athens, which is inserted here . . . Now the first exchange of speeches, after Pericles's last speech, concerns the conflict between the Spartans and the Plataeans. And the Plataeans, as you will remember, were allies of the Athenians. They were Boeotians, and therefore they belonged racially together with the Thebans, the Thebans being important allies of the Spartans; but the Plataeans, who had fought together with the Athenians against the Persians in the Persian Wars, were on the Athenian side. The exchange is based on relevant oaths, which [were] still binding on the two or three parties of the conflict: the Spartans, the Thebans, the Plataeans, the Athenians.

Now it seems to me that it is a particularly worthy of note that the Spartan King Archidamus, whom we have met so frequently, begins his final reply to the Plataeans by calling on the gods and heroes who possess the Plataean land to be witnesses to the justice of the Peloponnesian cause, chapter 19,[i] a cause of somewhat dubious justice, if you remember that the Thebans had started the whole thing by invading Plataea in the midst of peace, as described by Thucydides in detail. But here, suddenly, for the first time Archidamus appeals to the gods. In the context, I think it can only mean this: the whole moral–political situation has undergone a profound change since the debate in Sparta. Things have become very serious, and merely human means and human motives are not sufficient. Even Archidamus, whom one could call the Spartan equivalent of Pericles, refers to the gods and heroes possessing the Plataean land.

So that is still extremely provisional and incomplete, of course, but I will try to continue the probe and perhaps a clear and unified picture will emerge. What is so remarkable to me is this. When reading Thucydides, as I think everyone has felt, there are so many things which are clear: military, diplomatic, naval, and so on. But then there are also these great riddles, and I don't mean those riddles due to a possible corruption of the text, but that one has a feeling that Thucydides means and knows much more than he says explicitly. How to get an access to it? Now that gods play a role in this connection is not, I think, a far-fetched thought. Mr. Kitto, whom Mr. Berns knows, a classical scholar, British classical scholar, in his book—what's the title, about Greek tragedy—

Mr. Berns: *Mimesis*?

LS: Ya, is it called *Mimesis*? No, that is Auerbach.

Mr. Berns: It is called *Greek Tragedy*.[2ii]

LS: I see. At any rate, I even own it, and it is a thoughtful book, and he shows that there is a certain fundamental view of human life which Thucydides shares with Sophocles and with other great poets. But of course at first glance the views of Sophocles and Aeschylus are much more orthodox, as they would be called today, than those of Thucydides. To which Mr. Kitto—to which fact which Kitto doesn't deny. He makes a remark: Of course Sophocles, perhaps the first the most pious of them all, was not a fundamentalist from the Bible Belt—I mean, assuming that you can speak of the Greek equivalent of the Bible Belt. Yes, I believe that. And I think Thucydides's beliefs, and also those of Sophocles, differed greatly from those of some old peasant woman in the mountains of Boeotia under all circumstances. But that is not enough. We have to be a bit more precise and say: What is the difference? And then we will have to study the remarks of Sophocles much more carefully. And what occurred to me the last week, I don't know whether I have succeeded in making this clear, is that a simple summary approaching a statistic of the speeches about gods, of the mentioning of gods in the speeches might give us much better clarity than we have acquired hitherto. And perhaps I can continue that little lecture next time.

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[i] See book 2, chap. 74.

[ii] H.D.F. Kitto, *Greek Tragedy: A Literary Study* (1939).

So now we should really turn to book 6. Book[s] 6 and 7 are, I believe, generally regarded as the grandest part of Thucydides's work: Sicilian expedition, the terrific character of the enterprise ending in indescribable disaster. And one can very well say that, contrasted with the story of Mantinea, the Spartan comedy, this is the Athenian tragedy. That would need some qualifications, because the usual end of a tragedy is that the hero is destroyed, deprived of his power, but Athens had an amazing resilience after the disaster. The disaster was completed in 413, and the war lasted nine more years. Now a few points we might mention, at the very beginning of book 6.[iii]

Reader:
These were the people, Greek and foreign—

Greek and barbarian?

LS: Oh, ya. Barbarians, ya.

Reader:
"These were the people, Greek and barbarian, which inhabited Sicily, and it was an island of this size that the Athenians were now so eager to attack. In fact they aimed at conquering the whole of it, though they wanted at the same time to make it look as though they were sending help to their own kinsmen and to their newly acquired allies there. (6.6)

LS: "Kinsmen." So in other words, meaning fellow Ionians, and racially . . . Yes, he doesn't mean that that this was an Athenian colony, the same stock. Yes?

Reader:
They were particularly encouraged by a delegation from Egesta in Athens at the time, who were most eager to secure Athenian intervention. The Egestaeans had gone to war with their neighbours the Selinuntines because of marriage rights and a piece of disputed territory. The Selinuntines had called in the Syracusans as allies, and were now pressing Egesta hard both by land and sea. So the Egestaeans— (6.6)

LS: Only one point. Egesta and Selinus are towards the northwestern end of Sicily, and Syracuse is of course in the east. Syracuse was therefore the most powerful city—in Sicily, I mean. Yes?

Reader:
So the Egestaeans reminded the Athenians of the alliance made in the time of Laches, during the war in which Leontini was concerned, and begged them to send a fleet and to come to their help. They put forward a number of arguments, but the main one was that if Syracuse, after driving out the people of Leontini, were allowed to escape scot-free, and to go on destroying the remaining allies of Athens until she acquired complete control of Sicily, the danger would then have to be faced that at some time or other the Syracusans, who were Dorians themselves, would come with a large force to the aid of their Dorian kinsmen and—

[iii] There is a break in the tape at this point.

LS: So again you see the racial issue, that the Dorians led by the Syracusans would subject also the Ionian minority to their sway, to the detriment of the Ionians. Yes?

Reader:
would join the Peloponnesians, who had originally sent them out as colonists, in the work of utterly destroying the power of Athens. It would be a wise thing, therefore, for Athens to make use of the allies she still had and to put a check on Syracuse, especially if Egesta would supply sufficient money to finance the war.

The Athenians heard these arguments frequently repeated in their assemblies by the Egestaeans and their supporters, and voted in favour of first sending delegates to Egesta in order to see whether the money which they said was in the treasury and the temples really did exist, and at the same time to find out what the position was with regard to the war with the Selinuntines. And so the Athenian delegation was sent off to Sicily. (6.6)

LS: Ya. Surely they were not completely deprived of sense; they wanted to check on the financial claims of their would-be or prospective allies, but otherwise they were interested in the proposition. That was the first history of that. Yes. Now let us turn to chapter 8.

Reader:
At the beginning of spring next year the Athenian delegation came back from Sicily. They were accompanied by—

LS: Namely, those people who had been sent to Egesta to look after their finances. Yes?

Reader:
They were accompanied by the Egestaeans, who brought sixty talents of uncoined silver—a month's pay for sixty ships, which was the number they were going to ask the Athenians to send them.

The Athenians held an assembly and listened to what the Egestaeans and their own delegation had to say. The report was encouraging, but untrue, particularly on the question of the money which was said to be available in large quantities in the treasury and in the temples. So they voted in favour of sending sixty ships to Sicily and appointed as commanders with full powers Alcibiades, the son of Clinias, Nicias, the son of Niceratus, and Lamachus, the son of Xenophanes, who were instructed to help the Egestaeans against the Selinuntines— (6.8)

LS: Namely, against their neighbors with whom they were at war. Ya? Selinus is also in the west, on the west coast. Yes?

Reader:
to reestablish Leontini also, if things went well with them in the war, and in general to make the kind of provisions for Sicily which might seem to them most in accordance with Athenian interests. (6.8)

LS: Ya. So this was—in spite of the deception practiced by Egesta, the Athenian appetite for conquest there was not diminished. Yes, now go on.

Reader:
Five days later another assembly was held to discuss the quickest means of getting the ships ready to sail and to vote any additional supplies that the generals might need for the expedition. Nicias had not wanted to be chosen for the command; his view was that the city was making a mistake and, on a slight pretext which looked reasonable, was in fact aiming at conquering the whole of Sicily—a very considerable undertaking indeed. He therefore came forward to speak in the hope of making the Athenians change their minds. The advice he gave was about as follows: (6.8)

LS: Ya. Now in the next—up to chapter 14, we hear the first speech about the Sicilian expedition, a speech delivered by Nicias—Nicias, whom we know. He has been a very respectable man as a general, also a very rich man, and those who know Plato's *Laches* know that he was also a very educated man. He had learned certain things from these kind of people vulgarly called the sophists [and] had a high regard for intellectual excellence and therefore for Socrates, and as such he is presented in the dialogue *Laches*. And then he plays a great role in some of the Aristophanean comedies. So one knows a bit about him apart from what we learn from Thucydides alone, though Thucydides is of course our main source. But the biography of Nicias in Plutarch is very much worth reading, because Plutarch had access to information which we have only through Plutarch now. And Nicias was a very respectable man, at least from the traditional point of view of respectability, the . . . would regard him as a hopeless bourgeois and despise him. Thucydides had the highest regard for him as a character, not without a profound criticism, as will appear later on.

Now shall we read Nicias's first speech? It's interesting that you see he mentioned three commanders with perfect—how would you call it in English? How is the word said: *autokratores* [αὐτοκράτορες]? With full power of decision. He had mentioned Alcibiades, Nicias, and Lamachus; although Alcibiades was mentioned in the first place, Nicias's speech comes first, further confirmation that what is at the center is most important. The only question is: From what point of view? But the point of view will appear when he see what does he say, and why is he given the word first? Shall we now read?

Reader:
"It is true that this assembly was called to deal with the preparations to be made for sailing to Sicily. Yet I still think that this is a question that requires further thought—is it really a good thing for us to send the ships at all? I think that we ought not to give such hasty consideration to so important a matter and on the credit of barbarians[iv] get drawn into a war which does not concern us. So far as I am concerned—"

LS: Ya, "people of foreign stock," that comes in again. In other words, they are not our own people whose fate is at stake. Yes?

Reader:

[iv] Warner has "foreigners."

So far as I am concerned personally, I gain honour by it and I am less frightened than most people about my own safety—not that I think that a man is any the worse citizen for taking reasonable care of his own safety and his own property; such men are, in fact, particularly anxious, for their own sakes, that the city should prosper. However, just as in the past I have never spoken against my convictions in order to gain honour, so I shall not do it now, but shall tell you what I think is for the best. I know that no speech of mine could be powerful enough to alter your characters, and it would be useless to advise you to safeguard what you have and not to risk what is yours already for doubtful prospects in the future. I shall therefore confine myself to showing you that this is the wrong time for such adventures and that the objects of your ambition are not to be gained easily." (6.9)

LS: Ya. What he says now here is what was called in formal rhetoric *captatio benevolentiae*, the gaining of the benevolence of the audience, showing the audience that he is worthy to be listened to because of his character. And the main point is this, what he emphasizes: I am not a coward. And he had proved that; he had played a considerable role as a general in the Peloponnesian War up to this time. I believe he was mentioned seven times as a general before this Sicilian expedition, and that's to say only Alcibiades was mentioned as frequently as a general as he. So he was an outstanding man, and he was a lucky man. He had conquered the island of Cythera, south of the Peloponnesus, which was a blow to the Spartans. He didn't have such credits as Cleon through the conquest of Sphacteria or Pylos, but still he was a successful and respected general. In addition, he was probably the wealthiest man in Athens, so what could he gain? He had reached the peak of fame and of wealth, and he would only jeopardize it by a new war. So he had no selfish interest whatever in a new war, but only in peace, and therefore his responsibility for the Peace of Nicias was perfectly in character. And so what distinguishes him from those Athenians, the majority, the minority, we don't yet know, but it seems the majority who want the Sicilian expedition? Well, these people are prepared to put into jeopardy what is available, what they have in their power for the sake of invisible things: the grandeur of conquest. It's very remarkable, because later on Nicias himself will be compelled to put all his faith in invisible things when things go wrong in Sicily. But for the time being, he is just a sober, practical, matter-of-fact man, who says: We don't need further conquests, we don't need to endanger what we possess for dubious prospects. Does this make sense as a speech? The beginning of the speech, meant to dissuade the Athenians from adventurous policies. Let's see. Yes?

Reader:
"What I say is this: in going to Sicily you are leaving many enemies behind you, and you apparently want to make new ones there and have them also on your hands. Possibly you think that the peace treaty which you have made gives you security; and, so long as you make no move, no doubt this treaty will continue to exist in name (for it has become a nominal thing, thanks to the intrigues of certain people here and in Sparta)—" (6.10)

LS: But you must not forget that this was Nicias's peace, and he must in a way discredit his own peace in order to warn the Athenians: There is a peace which I made, but you can't trust it. If you build on it and take it as a certainty and take on new adventures, that may lead to a renewed outbreak of the war. Yes?

Reader:

"it will certainly not stop our enemies from attacking us immediately, if in any part of the world any considerable forces of our own should suffer a defeat. In the first place, they only made the peace because of their misfortunes; it was forced on them, and in the matter of prestige we had the advantage. Then also in the treaty itself there are a number of points still not settled. There are some states, too, and important ones as well, who have not yet accepted the peace terms even as they stand. Some of these are openly at war with us, others, because Sparta has not yet made a move, are still holding back, but our truces with them are renewable every ten days, and it is extremely likely that, once they find us with our forces divided (which is just what we are in such a hurry to do), they will be only too eager to make war on us together with the Sicilians, whom they would rather have had as allies in the past than almost any other people. All these are points to be considered; we have not yet come safely into harbour, and this is no time for running risks or for grasping at a new empire before we have secured the one we have already. For the fact is that the Chalcidians in Thrace have been in revolt from us for many years and are still unsubdued; and in other areas, too, we get only a grudging obedience from our subjects." (6.10)

LS: He refers to the story of northern Greece, you know, which was Athenian territory, [which] was supposed to be returned to Athens after the peace of Nicias but was *not* returned, and then now you're bound to have another war again. Yes?

Reader:
"And now we rush to the help of Egesta, of all places—an ally of ours, we say, which as been wronged; meanwhile doing nothing about putting right our own wrongs which we have suffered all this time from the rebels." (6.10)

LS: Ya. I think that is a perfectly sound argument. It is a bit in conflict with the fact that Nicias was the originator, was the chief driving force behind the Peace of Nicias, and now admitting that this peace is not peace. But otherwise, what he says . . . I think. Yes?

Reader:
"Yet these rebels, once crushed, could be kept down; whereas even if we did conquer the Sicilians, there are so many of them and they live so far off that it would be very difficult to govern them. It is senseless to go against people who, even if conquered, could not be controlled, while failure would leave us much worse off than we were before we made the attempt. My opinion is, too, that Sicily, as it is at present, is not a danger to us, and that it would be even less of a danger if it came under the control of Syracuse (the possibility with which the Egestaeans are always trying to frighten you)." (6.11)

LS: In other words, this alleged danger, a Sicilian empire, so to speak, controlled by Syracuse, would not be bad for Athens at all. Why?

Reader:
"As things are now it is possible that some Sicilians might come against us independently because of their affection for Sparta; but, supposing them to be all under the control of Syracuse, it is hardly likely that one empire would attack another, because if they were to join the Peloponnesians in destroying our empire, they would probably find that their own empire would be destroyed by the same people and for the same reasons."

LS: Ya. What do you say about this argument? Assuming that the Spartans would conquer Syracuse, then what would happen? A kind of situation as between Russia and China? Or what does he mean? They would neutralize one another? . . . Let us see what is driving it.

Reader:
"The best way for us to make ourselves feared by the Hellenes in Sicily is not to go there at all; and the next best thing is to make a demonstration of our power and then, after a short time, go away again." (6.11)

LS: Showing the flag, ya, as it was called elsewhere.

Reader:
"We all know that what is most admired is what is farthest off and least liable to have its reputation put to the test; and if anything went wrong with us, they would immediately look down on us and join our enemies here in attacking us. This is, in fact, Athenians, your own experience with regard to Sparta and her allies. Your successes against them, coming so unexpectedly compared with what you feared at first, have now made you despise them and set your hearts on the conquest of Sicily. But one's enemy's misfortunes are insufficient grounds for self-satisfaction; one can only feel real confidence when one has mastered his designs. And we ought to realize that, as a result of the disgrace they have suffered, the Spartans have only one thought, and that is how they can even now regain their own reputation by overthrowing us—as is natural when one considers that military honour is the be-all and the end-all of their existence." (6.11)

LS: In other words, the main point, to come back: *the* enemy is Sparta, but Nicias was one of the most pro-Spartan Athenians. The enemy is Sparta, the Spartans want revenge. And that is the absolutely safe count for our calculations: Don't increase your danger by adding another powerful enemy, in this case Sicily, and in particular Syracuse. And what leads the Athenians into that folly? The Athenians were lucky. *Tychē* [τύχη] was on their side. And what one mustn't [do]—one must not trust one's luck. We have heard this before: one can trust only in that which one has reasonably acquired. And the piece of luck was of course, that is what he means, Sphacteria or Pylos, you know, where the Spartan embassy in Athens at that time had said: That was a piece of luck, and don't trust your luck too much. This is the line which Nicias here follows. Yes?

Reader:
"So, if we keep our senses, we shall see that what we are fighting for has nothing to do with these Egestaeans in Sicily, who do not even speak our own language—"

LS: Ya, literally translated, "barbaric men," "barbarian men." Ya. Yes, but what is our concern?

Reader:
"our real problem is to defend ourselves vigorously against the oligarchical machinations of Sparta." (6.11)

LS: Sparta is not mentioned, but he means Sparta. So that is clear here, he appeals to the democratic sentiment or prejudices of the Athenians: Your enemy is that reactionary Sparta at your doorstep, which is bent on revenge, and not these savages at the outer ends of Sicily who can't do you any harm. And forget about them. Yes?

Reader:
"We should also remember that it is only recently that we have had a little respite from a great plague and from the war, and so are beginning to make good our losses in men and money. The right thing is that we should spend our new gains at home and on ourselves instead of on these exiles who are begging for assistance and whose interest it is to tell lies and make us believe them, who have nothing to contribute themselves except speeches, who leave all the danger to others and, if they are successful, will not be properly grateful, while if they fail in any way they will involve their friends in their own ruin.

"No doubt there is someone sitting here who is delighted at having been chosen for the command and who, entirely for his own selfish reasons, will urge you to make the expedition—and all the more so because he is still too young for his post. He wants to be admired for the horses he keeps, and because these things are expensive, he hopes to make some profit out of his appointment. Beware of him, too, and do not give him the chance of endangering the state in order to live a brilliant life of his own. Remember that with such people maladministration of public affairs goes with personal extravagance; remember, too, that this is an important matter, and not the sort of thing that can be decided upon and acted upon by a young man in a hurry." (6.12)

LS: Ya. So in other words, all rational arguments speak against the Sicilian expedition, and that seems also to have been the opinion of Pericles himself, if you remember the final statement about Pericles in chapter 65 of book 2, that Pericles's testament, as it were: We can win the war if we do not add additional adventures to that war. But Pericles and Nicias are very different people; their motives are different and their arguments are different. Only on the general line of policy—namely, no Sicilian expedition—they probably would have agreed.

And now at the end he uses a new argument. This war is obviously an irrational venture. Who promotes it? Being a gentleman, he doesn't become what they call "personal," he doesn't mention [any] [3]names with this. But he makes it perfectly clear to everyone whom he regards as this person, namely, this young man, this playboy with his horses, and who wins one chariot race after the other and who wants to have in addition this culminating glory that brought Athens to the peak of her power by the conquest of Sicily. And so this warning addressed against Alcibiades is of a fitting conclusion, or almost conclusion because there is still something which he has left.

Reader:
"It is with real alarm that I see this same young man's party sitting at his side in this assembly all called in to support him, and I, on my side, call for the support of the older men among you. If any one of you is sitting next to one of his supporters, do not allow yourself to be brow-beaten or be frightened of being called a coward if you do not vote for war. Do not, like them, indulge in hopeless passions for what is not there." (6.12)

LS: Ya. The word in Greek is very beautiful, *dyserotas einai tôn apontôn* [δυςέροτας εἶναι τῶν ἀπόντων]. *Erôs* [ἔρως], you know, to be involved in. *Dyserôs* [δυσέρως], that is like, the word dys- is a composition; dys- is used now all the time, all the time. But I'm sorry, no example occurs to me at the moment. Dys-, negative, something negative.

Student: . . . Disassociate?

LS: Ya, but that is Latin, is is not? It is. No . . .

Student: Dysfunctional.

LS: Ya. Ya, that is what I want! That I hear all the time. Doctors say that, the liver and what not. Ya, dys-. Dys-: "to be in an averse way in love with absent things," instead of being in love with what you have, with your own, and especially since you have so much already! Yes. The word *erôs* [ἔρως] doesn't occur too often, by the way, in Thucydides. And this combination, *dyserôs* [δυσέρως], occurs, I believe, only here. Pericles had asked the Athenians to become lovers, *erastai* [ἐρασταί], of Athens. Ya, lovers, but not *dyserôs* [δυσέρως], *dyserastai* [δυσέρασται]. Yes?

Reader:
"Remember that success comes from foresight and not much is ever gained simply by wishing for it. Our country is now on the verge of the greatest danger she has ever known. Think of her, hold up your hands against this proposal, and vote in favour of leaving the Sicilians alone to enjoy their own country and manage their own affairs within the boundaries (perfectly satisfactory to us) which now divide us from them—the Ionian sea, for the voyage along the coast, and the Sicilian sea, for the direct voyage. And let the Egestaeans, in particular, be told that, just as they started their war with the Selinuntines without consulting Athens, so they must themselves be responsible for making peace; and in the future we are not making allies, as we have done in the past, of the kind of people who have to be helped by us in their misfortunes, but who can do nothing for us when we need help from them." (6.13)

LS: In other words, a reasonable isolationism, no gambling. What he translated here with "country" is in Greek *patris* [πατρίς], which is literally the fatherland, a term which occurs again at the very end of Nicias's speech. It doesn't occur too often in Thucydides, but as I've found out by looking at the dictionary, the Thucydides lexicon, it occurs much more often than I had thought. I had for a moment the silly hope that these two speeches of Nicias and Alcibiades were the only ones in which they were followed . . . and that would have been in its way a beauty, but it's not beautiful enough for Thucydides, so we have to give that up. Because the difference—a *polis* [πόλις] does not have that degree of sanctity, of sacredness, which *patris* [πατρίς], which fatherland has. In the case of the fatherland, you think of the place where your ancestors are buried and so on, something which you do not necessarily think [of] when you speak of the *polis* [πόλις]. Yes?

Reader:

"And I call upon you, the president of the assembly, as you know it is your business to care for the city's interests and as you wish to show yourself a good citizen, to put this question to the vote and allow the Athenians to debate the matter once again. And if you shrink from putting the matter to the vote again, you must remember that you cannot be blamed for a violation of the law when there are so many witnesses here on your side. Consider, too, that in this way you will be acting as the physician for your misguided city, and that the duty of those who hold office is simply this, to do all the good they can to their country, or in any case never to do any harm that can be avoided." (6.14)

LS: Country is again here *patris* [πατρίς], "the fatherland." So there is also in this speech not a single reference to the gods. I mention this in passing. Ya. So he has made a very powerful cause against the Sicilian expedition, and especially also by discrediting the promoter of this plan. What is Alcibiades, that super crook, as we can say, going to do? The net result you know from general history, even if you haven't read the sixth book: Alcibiades persuades the Athenians of the wisdom to go to Sicily. How can he get rid of Nicias's strong arguments? That we will see, I hope, next time.

Alcibiades obviously had quite fantastic plans, based nevertheless on sober calculations. The Athenian empire, which would gradually, which would expand to the west, because the way to the east was still closed by the Persian Empire, and the attempt of the Athenians to overrun the Persian Empire had failed in about 449. But the west, that was much weaker, there was no Persian king. These were cities all smaller and weaker than Athens, and divided among themselves. Then there was of course one great power: that was Carthage. But Carthage was on the other side of the Mediterranean, and the Sicilians had been, especially the Sicilian tyrants, had been quite successful in their wars against the Carthaginians, so that was possible, a possibility. The only question was: Would the Athenians truly support it when the going would get rough, as it would do sooner or later? That is described by Thucydides in an unrivalled and inimitable way, as you will see. There are all kinds of theories, because this is a particular unity, books 6 and 7: Did he not write this in one motion, in one period of writing and then patch it together to other parts written either earlier or later, and so on? I think a question which should occupy the minds of people who have too much leisure.

So next time we will then make the acquaintance, the first true acquaintance, of Alcibiades, because there were quite a few references to Alcibiades before which we did not consider. He was the man behind the intrigues in the Peloponnesus to get the Spartans and Argives by the ears so that Argos would come over to Athens and give Athens an opening to the Peloponnesus, and many other things. There he was not so very successful. Ya.

Session 12: no date
Book 6, chapters 16-40

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —sixth book, and especially of the discussion in Athens about the Sicilian expedition. We have read Nicias's speech: Nicias, this perfect gentleman, opposing that gamble, the expedition to Syracuse, and tracing it to its instigator, that dubious character Alcibiades. And the argument is so strong, both as far as the expedition is concerned and as far as Alcibiades is concerned, that one really doesn't know how Alcibiades can get out of that fix. But we have had a similar situation before, when the fate of the Plataeans was at stake. And there was a discussion between Cleon and Nicias and when Nicias also had a strong point, but Cleon won because Nicias, precisely because he is such a fine gentleman, doesn't use certain weapons which a less-fine gentleman doesn't hesitate to use.

So now we come then to Alcibiades's reply. That is chapter 16. Ya. Now shall we begin with chapter 16, and whoever has it should read it.

Reader: Shall I?

LS: Ya, by all means. I think we have a kind of contract, don't we? [Laughter] Not in the mobster sense, but in a more respectable sense.

Reader: Fine.
"Athenians, since Nicias has made this attack on me, I must begin by saying that I have a better right than others to hold the command and that I think I am quite worthy of the position. As for all the talk there is against me, it is about things which bring honour to my ancestors and myself, and to our country profit as well." (6.16)

LS: Now "country" is here, as well as in other cases in this context, *patris* [πατρίς], which means fatherland and has somewhat stronger emotional, not to say religious overtones than country. Yes?

Reader:
"There was a time when the Hellenes imagined that our city had been ruined by the war, but they came to consider it even greater than it really is, because of the splendid show I made as its representative at the Olympic games, when I entered seven chariots for the chariot race (more than any private individual has entered before) and took the first, second, and fourth places, and saw that everything else was arranged in a style worthy of my victory." (6.16)

LS: You see, he's an honest man. He doesn't say "the first three places," but only "the first, the second, and the fourth."

Reader:
"It is customary for such things to bring honour, and the fact that they are done at all must also give an impression of power. Again, though it is quite natural for my fellow citizens to envy me for the magnificence with which I have done things in Athens, such as providing choruses and so on, yet to the outside world this also is evidence of our strength. Indeed, this is a very useful kind

of folly, when a man spends his own money not only to benefit himself but his city as well. And it is perfectly fair for a man who has a high opinion of himself not to be put on a level with everyone else; certainly when one is badly off one does not find people coming to share in one's misfortunes. And just as no one takes much notice of us if we are failures, so on the same principle one has to put up with it if one is looked down upon by the successful: one cannot demand equal treatment oneself unless one is prepared to treat everyone else as an equal." (6.16)

LS: So in other words, Alcibiades doesn't hesitate to question a certain simplistic democratic notion. In a democracy, people are not equal: some are rich, some are poor, some are gifted, some are ungifted, and so on, and this will show. And there's nothing to be ashamed of; on the contrary, it gives glory and prestige to the rest of the population. We are offended by this controversy up to the present day, I believe, aren't we? It may have a different name today. Yes?

Reader: I think Mr. Berns has a question.

LS: Oh—

Mr. Berns: I found this in a certain way rather shocking, and I just wonder whether it means that we have so far advanced in absorbing or appropriating the democratic spirit, because anyone nowadays wouldn't talk like this, at least in this country. One would rather refer to one's good fortune that one has wealth, and that one is privileged to serve.

LS: Yes, that would be true. But there is also the other side. That was probably before you were born, or least before you were an observer of political things. Do you remember the name of Henry Wallace?

Mr. Berns: Yes.

LS: Well, his biography was called—he talked about the "common man." But his biographer, whose name I don't remember, called him, as a compliment, an uncommon man.[i]

Mr. Berns: Yeah, but not in this sense. I remember that book.

LS: I have never read it, but I simply noticed that even in an extremely, extreme democratic case like that of Henry Wallace, to be uncommon in a certain way might be a recommendation. He was uncommon as a devotee of democracy. And surely, God forbid that I should compare Alcibiades to Henry Wallace or vice versa, because the titles are so different, titles of fame, but inequality is . . . in all cases. Ya, I shall not speak of the inequality which played a great role in the life of Roosevelt, and even of our present president, and was and is proudly acknowledged. Service, yes, but unequal service, so that equality means of course something very much, say, in criminal law, if you murder, rob, listen in, but then you will be punished regardless of whether you are rich or poor. But these are not the politically interesting cases.

[i] Frank Kingdon, *An Uncommon Man: Henry A. Wallace and 60 Million Jobs* (Readers' Press, Inc, 1945). Wallace (1888-1965), Secretary of Commerce and of Agriculture under President Franklin Roosevelt and his vice-president from 1941 to 45 and dropped by him in favor of Harry S. Truman in 1944. In 1948 he ran unsuccessfully for president against Truman on the pro-Soviet Progressive ticket.

Mr. Berns: But, I mean, for instance, if one thinks of the Rockefellers, the Kennedys, the Roosevelts, who . . . similar, I think they might talk about how their wealth has made it possible for them to serve, whereas others [who] were not so fortunate couldn't serve, but I don't think that one would ever find this sort of positive reference to what their wealth has enabled them to do. They will defend it when others mention it first, but they don't go out of their way to mention this.

LS: The utmost I would grant is this, that I suppose that if a politician were to boast of his belonging to the jet set, this might not necessarily be a recommendation in the present-day American democracy. Not necessarily, but in certain circuits, very democratic circuits, and I mean democratic not in the sense of the party, it would be a recommendation.

Mr. Berns: Recently Vice President Agnew has had to deny . . . because of a friendship with some . . . Frank Sinatra.

LS: I heard the name, yes.

Student: Mr. Strauss, doesn't Mr. Berns have a point, namely, that first of all the Greeks didn't know what humility is?

LS: No, that doesn't exist.

Same Student: . . . know it better than.

LS: No, that doesn't exist.

Student: Even if they don't know it, there is a kind of—there is not any more . . . the assurance that property is, property and big property that this is . . .

LS: No—

Student: That there is something the bourgeois doesn't have anymore, this sense that this is proper. There is a problem about . . .

LS: Ya, to a certain extent, but what you said about humility strikes me more. Humility was generally for the Greeks a vice, something wrong. But there are a very few cases when it has a positive meaning. I think there is one case in Plato's *Laws*, and one in Xenophon's *Spartan Constitution*, in which humility is praised. But this is Sparta, a very old-fashioned backward place, not Athens, so that the fundamentalist Bible Belt, if I may quote Mr. Kitto again, there it was . . . But surely not Alcibiades, [he] wasn't proud of his humility. I think they have said about a certain monastic order that their highest title to pride is their humility. I forgot which it was.

Student: Franciscans.[1]

LS: What about this?

Student 1: One has to say that this is extreme vanity . . .

Student 2: That's if you take our attitude as the correct attitude.

Student 1: Yeah.

Student 2: But our attitude might not be the correct attitude.

Student 1: Maybe, maybe, but otherwise . . .

LS: Ya. Surely—no, that is a perfectly legitimate question, but I would say if we would like to study the phenomenon of humility, I would propose that we would not start from Alcibiades. [Laughter] Yes, now?

Reader:
"What I know is that people like this—all, in fact, whose brilliance in any direction has made them prominent—are unpopular in their life-times, especially with their equals and also with others with whom they come into contact; but with posterity you will find people claiming relationship with them, even where none exists, and you will find their fatherlands[ii] boasting of them, not as though they were strangers or disreputable characters, but as fellow countrymen and doers of great deeds." (6.16)

LS: So in other words, that is also rather interesting. The true reward for excellence is *post mortem*, and therefore high ambition is . . . you know? Because you will be rewarded for your outstanding achievements, be it in Olympia, be it on the battlefield, or be it in council, when you are dead, when you are no longer envied, and when you're alive . . . Yes?

Reader:
"This is what I aim at myself, and because of this my private life comes in for criticism; but the point is whether you have anyone who deals with public affairs better than I do. Remember that I brought about a coalition of the greatest powers of the Peloponnese, without putting you to any considerable danger or expense, and made the Spartans risk their all on the issue of one day's fighting at Mantinea, and though they were victorious in the battle, they have not even yet quite recovered their confidence." (6.16)

LS: You see, he claims credit for that big defeat of Sparta, which from a purely tactical point of view was of course, as we have seen, a Spartan victory but which was in fact a comedy, a comical victory. He is responsible for that; he brought about that anti-Spartan alliance, and so whatever minor mistakes he might have made in his private life, publicly he is a man of great merits. Yes?

Reader:
"So, in my youth and with this folly of mine which is supposed to be so prodigious, I found the right arguments for dealing with the power of the Peloponnesians, and the energy which I

[ii] Warner has "countries."

displayed made them trust me and follow my advice. Do not therefore be afraid of me now because I am young, but while I still have the vigour of my youth and Nicias the reputation for being lucky, make the best use—" (6.17)

LS: You see what he says. Nicias has the *reputation* for being lucky, and that is a beautiful combination: I am young, vigorous, and energetic, but these are hazardous qualities. My opponent has, however, the *reputation* of being lucky. Now if we bring the two things together, we are bound to win. That is his . . . And Nicias cannot deny the matter without discrediting himself, ya, because that is the basis of his reputation in Athens. Yes?

Reader:
"but while I still have the vigour of my youth and Nicias the reputation for being lucky, make the best use you can of what each of us has to offer. Do not change your minds about the expedition to Sicily on the grounds that we shall have a great power to deal with there. The Sicilian cities have swollen populations made out of all sorts of mixtures, and there are constant changes and rearrangements in the citizen bodies. The result is that they lack the feeling that they are fighting for their own fatherland; no one has adequate armour for his own person, or a proper establishment on the land. What each man spends his time on is in trying to get from the public whatever he thinks he can get either by clever speeches or by open sedition—always with the intention of going off to live in another country, if things go badly with him. Such—" (6.17)

LS: Ya. That is, in other words: Don't be unduly impressed by the terrific power of Sicily of which Nicias has spoken. These are not true cities as we have them in the mother country, please, these are colonials who lived there for a time. The argument reminds a bit of what Hitler thought about the Russians—a bit, you know, they are easy to . . . Then of course Hitler had the additional argument it was better than what Stalin had done to the Red Army. But still, so that is nothing to worry about. But the main point is that precisely the alleged effect of Alcibiades and the admitted virtue of Nicias together will produce a winning combination, and therefore Nicias's argument is defeated. Yes? Now let us turn to chapter 18.

Reader:
"There seems to be, therefore, no reasonable argument to induce us to hold back ourselves or to justify any excuse to our allies in Sicily for not helping them. We have sworn to help them, and it is our duty—"

LS: Important: "sworn." Even Alcibiades refers to the oath which binds the Athenians to come to the help of the Egestaeans against their enemies. Yes?

Reader:
"and it is our duty to help them, without raising the objection that we have had no help from them ourselves. The reason why we made them our allies was not that we wanted them to send us reinforcements here, but in order that they should be a thorn in the flesh for our enemies in Sicily, and so prevent them from coming here to attack us." (6.18)

LS: Also a reply to Nicias, who had said they would never come to your help against the Spartans here, and you are such fools that you go to western Sicily and expose yourself in this way to attack on the part of the Spartans. Ya. Yes?

Reader:
"This is the way we won our empire, and this is the way all empires have been won—by coming vigorously to the help of all who ask for it, irrespective of whether they are Hellenes or not."

LS: Ya, whether they are barbarians or Hellenes—that doesn't make any difference, so strictly they are not bound by any old-fashioned considerations. Yes?

Reader:
"Certainly if everyone were to remain inactive or go in for racial distinctions when it is a question of giving assistance, we should add very little to our empire and should be more likely to risk losing it altogether. One does not only defend oneself against a superior power when one is attacked; one takes measures in advance to prevent the attack materializing. And it is not possible for us to calculate, like housekeepers, exactly how much empire we want to have. The fact is that we have reached a stage where we are forced to plan new conquests and forced to hold on to what we have got, because there is a danger that we ourselves may fall under the power of others unless others are in our power. And you cannot look upon this idea of a quiet life in quite the same way as others do—not, that is, unless you are going to change your whole way of living and make it like theirs is.

"In the assurance therefore that, in going abroad, we shall increase our power at home, let us set out on this voyage. It will have a depressing effect on the arrogance of the Peloponnesians when they see that we despise the quiet life we are living now and have taken on the expedition to Sicily. At the same time we shall either, as is quite likely, become the rulers of all Hellas by using what we gain in Sicily, or, in any case, we shall do harm to the Syracusans, and so do good to ourselves and our allies. Our security is guaranteed by our navy, so that we can either stay there, if things go well, or come back again; for we shall have naval superiority over all the Sicilians put together.

"Do not be put off by Nicias's arguments for non-intervention and his distinctions between the young and the old. Let us instead—" (6.18)

LS: Ya. Nicias's *apragmosyne* [ἀπραγμοσύνη], meaning "not meddling," ya, "not meddling in other things." Beware, keep what you have, don't take unnecessary risks. Now Athens must be meddling, must have an active foreign policy, as they would call it; otherwise they will not remain strong. Yes?

Reader:
"Let us instead keep to the old system of our fathers who joined together in counsel, young and old alike, and raised our city[iii] to the position it now holds. So now in the same way make it your endeavour to raise this city to even greater heights, realizing that neither youth nor age can do anything one without the other, but that the greatest strength is developed when one has a

[iii] Warner has "state."

combination where all sorts are represented—the inferior types, the ordinary types, and the profoundly calculating types, all together. Remember, too, that the city, like everything else, will wear out of its own accord if it remains at rest, and its skill in everything will grow out of date; but in conflict it will constantly be gaining new experience and growing more used to defend itself not by speeches, but in action. In general, my view is that a city which is active by nature will soon ruin itself if it changes its nature and becomes idle, and that the way that men find their greatest security is in accepting the character and the institutions which they actually have, even if they are not perfect, and in living as nearly as possible in accordance with them." (6.18)

This was the speech of Alcibiades.

LS: It goes on. Now let me see, what did I make—oh, I'm sorry. Ya. I'm sorry, I missed it. The risk of inactivity is much greater for an imperial city like Athens than that of continuing the policy which made her imperial, and we must keep our armed forces in fighting trim and that cannot be done in except by making the fighting, and therefore that is the only way to preserve our greatness. Ya. This was Alcibiades's speech. And now what happens next?

Reader:
After listening to him, and to the Egestaeans and to some exiles from Leontini who came forward as suppliants, reminding them of their oaths and begging for help, the Athenians became much more eager than before to make the expedition. (6.19)

LS: You see, the oaths play a very great role. That's before the Athenian *demos*, who are more pious than the upper stratum, and that leads to very interesting developments later on. Yes?

Reader:
Nicias realized that there was no longer any hope of diverting them from their course by using the arguments that he had used already, but thought that there was a possibility of making them change their minds if he were to make an exaggerated estimate of the forces required. He therefore came forward again and spoke as follows:— (6.19)

LS: Now just one second. So it is said Nicias sees he has lost the argument, and he cannot fall back on what he had said in his own speech so he must persuade the Athenians in an entirely different way that the gamble is too great. That is the transition to Nicias's second speech, which comes now. What about—?

Student: You didn't comment on a somewhat earlier passage, the introduction to Alcibiades's speech, when Thucydides goes through Alcibiades's vices or what appear to be vices to the many. I was wondering . . .

LS: Well, I mean, to put the case against Alcibiades as implicated by Thucydides as sharply as possible, one could say he was an extremely gifted *playboy*, and that is of course not a recommendation, least of all in a democracy. I remember a book by a Frenchman called André Malraux.[iv] He was a liaison officer between the French and the British in the First World War.

[iv]André Malraux (1901-1976), French writer, adventurer, and anti-Fascist, in later life a pillar of Gaullism. The source of Strauss's anecdote is obscure: despite an incidental reference to Xenophon in

And he was of course *normalien*, if you know what that is. Ya? A graduate of the most prestigious school in France, École normale.[v] And he was an intellectual if there ever was one, and then he was suddenly thrown together through the war with British Tories, who had an utter contempt for intellectuals and only liked people who were riding straight to the fences, and especially one called Parker, very intelligent, and Parker spoke of intellectuals only with contempt. And one day Malraux had the nerve to say to Parker: But listen: you talk all the time in this nasty way about intellectuals, and yesterday I saw you in the trenches reading Xenophon in Greek! Whereupon Parker replied: Ha-ha! Xenophon, that was a gentleman! A man like Winston Churchill! How can you—he was not an intellectual, which of course agrees with the judgment of many classical scholars. So something of this kind has happened here. Did I answer your question or did I—?

Student: Well, what the great difference is that in this passage Thucydides seems to throw a good deal of . . . on the Athenian *demos*, saying that Alcibiades through his habits made the *demos* have to react this way.

LS: Yes, it is more complicated, really more complicated. Of course Thucydides is a severe critic of the Athenian *demos*, but he is also a severe critic of quite a few people of the upper classes. We have seen a . . . critique of Nicias in the Sphacteria–Pylos affair, where all sensible men thought "Good riddance" if Cleon would go to Sphacteria, because in the likely case that he will be defeated, we are rid of him, and then the miracle happens that Cleon wins there, and he has more power in Athens than ever before. Something similar is happening here. It is much more complicated. You must be patient. It's a good lesson for us too, in judging about contemporary politics. The many things which are involved, one doesn't know everything, people, especially people in power, do not have all their secrets and so on. So let's wait a little bit. It's all right?

Student: Yes.

LS: Now how does Nicias try to save the days for the Sicilian expedition?[2vi]

Reader:
"I see, Athenians, that you are quite determined on the expedition, and I hope it may turn out as we all wish. I shall now tell you what my opinion is as things stand at present. We are going to set out against cities which are, according to my information, of considerable strength, not subjects of one another and not wanting the kind of change by which they would be glad to escape from some oppressive government and accept a new government on easier terms; very unlikely, in fact, to give up their freedom in order to be ruled by us. The numbers also of the Hellenic cities are very large for one island. Apart from Naxos and Catana, which I expect will join us because of their racial connection with Leontini—" (6.20)

Malraux's *Anti-Memoirs,* translated by T. Kilmartin (New York: Holt, Rinehart &Winston, 1968), 105, I have not found that recounted by Strauss or any mention of a man named Parker.

[v] The *Ecole normale supérieure* (Higher School of Teaching), one of the so-called *grandes écoles,* France's most prestigious institutions of higher education, admission to which is by competitive examination.

[vi] The reader rereads part of Alcibiades's speech and then corrects himself. This has been deleted.

LS: Keep this issue of racial connection in mind: it plays a considerable role, not too strongly emphasized, but it's already there. I mean, that is the great hope of the Athenians that the racial diversity of the Sicilians might be helpful to the Athenians. Yes?

Reader:
"there are seven other cities equipped with military and naval forces very much along the same lines as our own, particularly Selinus and Syracuse, our main objectives. They have great numbers of hoplites and archers and javelin-throwers, great numbers of triremes, and plenty of men to form the crews. They have money, not only in the hands of private people, but also in the temples of Selinus, and Syracuse also receives the payment of first-fruits from some of the native peoples. But the greatest advantage they have over us is in the number of their horses and in the fact that they grow their own corn and do not have to import any." (6.20)

LS: Of course this is also an issue later on, largely contributing to the Athenian defeat because they do not bring horses with them, and the Sicilians have horses. And horses are absolutely necessary to cut off supply. Yes? Let's read the beginning of chapter 21.

Reader:
"To deal with a power of this kind we shall need something more than a fleet with an inconsiderable army. We must have in addition a large army of infantry to sail with us, if we want our actions to come up to what we have in mind, and are not to be restricted in our movements by the numbers of their cavalry—"

LS: Ya, that's again; and he speaks also of the cavalry later on in chapter 22. We do not have to read that again because it doesn't bring anything new. But that is the key point: the chief superiority of the Sicilians is the presence of cavalry, and nothing is done by the Athenians to remedy that defect. Ya. Now let us turn to chapter 23, the second paragraph.

Reader:
"We must act on the assumption that we are going off to found a city among foreigners and among enemies, and that those who do this have either to become masters of the country on the very first day they land in it, or be prepared to recognize that, if they fail to do so, they will find hostility on every side. Fearing this and knowing that we shall have need of much good counsel and more good fortune (a hard thing to be sure of, since we are but men), I wish to leave as little as possible to fortune before I sail, and to set out with an army that, according to all reasonable probability, should be secure. This I believe to be the best way to guarantee the general interests of the city and the safety of those of us who are going to serve in the campaign. If anyone thinks differently, I invite him to take the command instead of me."

LS: This is Nicias's speech, Nicias's second speech by which he tries to refute Alcibiades's and the other young people's proposal. But what does he do in fact? What does he achieve?

Student: The Athenians offer the ships to him.

LS: I do not know whether I understood you acoustically.

Student: The Athenians are not deterred by the—

LS: Ya, sure. Ya, but why are they not deterred? Why are they not deterred? Because Nicias shows them a way of how to overcome that obstacle. He shows: Sicily is a tough proposition, but I see a way to overcome that if we make the proper preparations. And therefore he proves without . . . that the combination of Nicias's long experience and Alcibiades's tempestuous temper is wonderful for that purpose.

Same Student: I'm surprised that Nicias didn't foresee that.

LS: Ya. But that is the point, you see. Nicias is a very fine gentleman, but he doesn't belong to the top drawer. Thucydides *never* says that; Thucydides is such a decent man, he would never compromise a noble character like Nicias. But for those among us who are willing to learn something, he indicates it clearly enough that in a tough situation a man like Nicias is not good enough. And that is—of course Nicias's defect in this respect is not the only reason for the failure; there is another reason to which we will come shortly, but that is an important point. Nicias's judgment is not the best. Alcibiades and even Laches have better judgment. Or was it Lamachus? I forgot that point. Ya.

Now Nicias's speech, we can say, has exactly the opposite effect which he had hoped for it, just as in the Pylos affair against Cleon. That is so, that is so. And now after this has not been decided and Nicias's proposals regarding the armament have been accepted, *tychē* [τύχη], chance, raises her ugly head in the form of the mutilation of the Hermae. The Hermae were statues of Hermes in front of houses and other places and seem to have been generally regarded as emblems of the *demos* in particular . . . At any rate, one morning the Hermae were mutilated, and this led to grave consequences. Let us read that, chapter 27.

Reader:
While these preparations were going on it was found that in one night nearly all the stone Hermae in the city of Athens had had their faces disfigured by being cut about. These are a national institution, the well-known square-cut figures, of which there are great numbers both in the porches of private houses and in the temples. No one knew who had done this, but large rewards were offered by the city[vii] in order to find out who the criminals were, and there was also a decree passed guaranteeing immunity to anyone, citizen, alien, or slave, who knew of any other sacrilegious act that had taken place and would come forward with information about it. (6.27)

LS: So that is a key point: wholly unexpected impious acts, and which of course would endanger the military enterprise in the opinion of the people. And, yes?

Reader:
The whole affair, indeed, was taken very seriously, as it was regarded as an omen for the expedition, and at the same time as evidence of a revolutionary conspiracy to overthrow the democracy.

[vii] Warner has "state."

Information was in fact forthcoming from some resident aliens and some personal servants. They had nothing to say about the Hermae, but told of some other cases which had happened previously when statues had been defaced by young men who were enjoying themselves after having had too much to drink, and also of mock celebrations of the mysteries held in private houses. One of those accused was Alcibiades. (6.28)

LS: May I mention here in passing a suspicion of mine which I believe is not entirely groundless? Most of you will have read Plato's *Banquet*, and there, at the end, the drunken Alcibiades comes in. And in addition there is something else: in the banquet Socrates divulges the mysteries. Mysteries. And the dramatic date of the *Symposium* is a year before the Sicilian expedition, 416. In brief, what I think Plato jocularly does in the *Banquet* is to tell the true story of what happened prior to the Sicilian expedition: that they are all wet, what they say. The truth is, Alcibiades didn't divulge any secret, unless you call that story with his sleeping with Socrates a guilty secret, which of course it was not because Socrates behaved marvelously in that situation. But some secret, some mystery was divulged, namely, by Socrates: what he had learned from Diotima. And he tells that in that story—and that could very well be regarded perhaps from some extremely orthodox man as a slightly impious act, surely not very orthodox. But this is only a passing remark, and which perhaps is of some help for the understanding of the *Banquet*. At any rate, these people at that time, some people brought Alcibiades in and said—not in connection to the Hermae but with other impious acts, and said: This is a fellow who is capable of such things. Go on.

Reader:
and this fact was taken up by those who disliked him most because he stood in the way of their keeping a firm hold themselves of the leadership of the people, and who thought that, if they could drive him out, they would step into the first place. They therefore exaggerated the whole thing and made all the noise they could about it, saying that the affair of the mysteries and the defacement of the Hermae were all part of a plot to overthrow the democracy, and that in all this Alcibiades had had a hand; evidence for which they found in the unconventional and undemocratic character of his life in general. (6.28)

Alcibiades denied the charges made against him on the spot and was prepared to stand his trial before sailing on the expedition, the preparations for which had now been completed, and to be examined as to whether he had done any of the things with which he was accused; he should suffer the penalty, if found guilty, and, if acquitted, should take up his command. He begged them not to listen to attacks made on him in his absence, but, if he was really guilty, to put him to death there and then, and he pointed out how unwise it would be to send him out in command of such a large army with such serious accusations still hanging over his head. His enemies, however, were afraid that, if the case was brought on at once, he would have the goodwill of the army and that the people would be lenient to him because of the popularity he had won by getting the Argives and some of the Mantineans to join in the expedition. They therefore did all they could to put things off and prevent the trial taking place, and produced some more speakers who said that Alcibiades ought to sail now, and not hold up the departure of the army, but that he should be tried on his return within a fixed number of days. Their plan was to bring some more serious accusation against him (which they could do all the more easily when he was away)— [viii]

[viii] There is a break in the tape at this point.

LS: —so onceAlcibiades has gone away, it's much easier to calumniate him and to get him condemned than when he is here. That was the situation. Of course, what the precise grounds on which he would have been condemned, whether that would have been impiety or the attempt to set up a tyranny in Athens, that is not yet clear here, but this is where we stand now.

Student: It may be premature to ask this.

LS: Please?

Same Student: But I'm surprised that Alcibiades would—

LS: You are surprised about what?

Same Student: That Alcibiades wins. Do you think he simply felt confident that he would be able to resist?

LS: No, because he didn't think the Athenians were completely insane, that they would at the same time ruin the Sicilian expedition and ruin him. You know, he trusted that the only prospect of success for the expedition was his being in command and that the Athenians knew it, but he underestimated his unpopularity or, to use a very harsh word, the superstition of the Athenian *demos*. That was the conflict.

Same Student: If they had been rational letting him lead the army, they wouldn't have interfered. Being not rational, they let him lead the army and then they tried to take him down.

LS: Ya. Ya, that was, that was the democracy. And I think that is what Thucydides had in mind in the strange statement in book 2, chapter 65, the eulogy of Pericles, when he says that in Pericles's time there was a perfect harmony between the public good, the common good, and the private good: What was good for Pericles was good for Athens, and vice versa. But after Pericles, there was a conflict in the two goods. These people wanted to have their place in the sun, and therefore they did all kinds of—you know, they were more interested with their advancement than with that of the city of Athens. And people think, of course, then that this was only the rivalry of the demagogues, but there is more to that, and we have seen an example already before, where Thucydides didn't emphasize it in any way, and that was the example of Demosthenes in Aetolia. Demosthenes was a remarkable man—perhaps even a relative of Thucydides, for all we know.[ix] And he had that defeat in Aetolia, in mid-central Greece. Well, what did he do when he was defeated? He didn't go home! Because the Athenians would say: You lost that battle, up, up to the lamppost! And so he stayed on in Aetolia, where he was very popular with the soldiers, [and] the next spring, when he won a splendid victory, and then he returned and everything was fine.

Now this is on a much smaller scale, but fundamentally the same thing [as] what happened to Alcibiades, only Alcibiades did not win that victory but the victory was won by Alcibiades's rivals, and they accused him, and successfully—and he had no choice, that's at least what he

[ix] I know of no text that supports this conjecture.

thought, but to betray Athens. To betray Athens' most strictly guarded strategic secrets to the Spartans, and then of course in addition seducing the Spartan queen,[x] that was only, how shall I say, a little bit of Alcibidean . . . but the main point was that he taught the Spartans how to defeat the Athenians, and this lesson fell on fertile soil. Later on he got in trouble with the Spartans, too, because he was not what you would call a very trustworthy and . . . man, but then he somehow got out of the fix again with the help of the Persian king. He became the advisor of the Persian king of how he, the arch-enemy of Greece, could keep the Greeks down by playing up the Spartans against the Athenians and the Athenians against the Spartans. And the end of Alcibiades is unclear; there are various reports, but surely he was maintained at the expense of the Spartan king on a lavish scale, and he gave the Athenian navy, who cruised in the northern waters, a very sound piece of advice before the battle of Aegospotamoi. And these fools said: You have nothing to say anymore, you are an exile and a traitor. And then they lost that battle, the Athenians lost that battle, and the consequence was that the Spartan commander—not a very likeable man, Lysander—went down with the Spartan navy and conquered Athens and that was the end of it. But if Alcibiades—that is what Xenophon and Thucydides suggest, especially Xenophon, who speaks more of . . . is that Alcibiades's advice was a strategically sound advice. He was an *extremely* clever man. I think we have no parallels to that in modern times. If you think, for example, of a man like Talleyrand, he was surely a very clever man, but he was throughout his life, in spite of his enormous vices, a patriotic Frenchman. Alcibiades was not . . . in many ways. Ya. Now there follows in chapter 30 the description of how the expedition, expeditionary corps leaves Athens.

Mrs. Kaplan: I ask a factual question. How did they proceed in voting for the war when they . . . They did vote—

LS: For the war . . .

Mrs. Kaplan: With hand . . .

LS: Ya, *cheirotonia* [χειροτονία] it's called, "raising the hands," because you can't do that by lot. I mean, you can't choose generals by lot, for obvious reasons, just as you cannot choose treasurers by lot. You know?

Mrs. Kaplan: Very democratic!

LS: No, no . . . the qualifications of democracy. I mean, the generals and treasurers had to be elected, had to be elected in our way of election, by looking at the presumed merits of the candidates. But for other purposes the lot was the democratic procedure. But these things, war and money, are too serious matters to leave them to the decision by lot. Now here in this chapter, 30, if you will be so good to look at—31, I'm sorry. Read the first paragraph of chapter 31.

Reader:
Certainly this expedition that first set sail was by a long way the most costly and the finest-looking force of Hellenic troops that up to that time had ever come from a single city. In

[x] This sensational allegation concerning Alcibiades is not to be found in Thucydides but is related by Plutarch (*Life of Alcibiades 23).*

numbers of ships and hoplites it was no greater than the force which Pericles took to Epidaurus and the same—

LS: No, that is already what he said before, what he uses—he calls it *polytelestatē* [πολυτελεστάτη], this expedition. *Polytelestatē* means the most expensive and most lavish. That is just the opposite of that term used by Pericles in the funeral speech: "We love the beautiful together with," *met' euteleias* [μετ' εὐτελείας]—that I always pronounce in the way in which I have heard it in school,[xi] but I think you would probably say *met' euteleias* [μετ' εὐτελείας], no? Ya, at any rate, that's the opposite. Here that is done on a big and lavish scale and so not at all in the old Periclean spirit. The term of *polytelēs* [πολυτελής] occurs again in chapter 31, paragraph 2, or is it paragraph 3?[xii] So. And now they sail. And that farewell to Athens is described in very moving terms: all the friends and relatives come, and there's pride about this beautiful country, and at the same time also fear of the relatives: What will happen to these sons and brothers? And it's a quite moving scene.

And then the next big thing is Syracuse, Syracuse, goal of the expedition. What is happening there? And there is a debate there between a man who doesn't believe that the Athenians will come and a man who rather believes that they may come. And the first speaker, who thinks that it's just—how do you call a canard, something, a fiction of imagination, a hoax, a hoax playing on the fear of the common people, and that is of course the leader of the *demos*. And he has a characteristic name, Athenagoras, which means literally the speaker of Athens for Athens, and so the two words, Athens and speaking, are combined.[xiii] I regard it as perfectly possible that such an Athenagoras didn't exist or at least didn't have that name, and Thucydides invented the name. And Athenagoras tries to show in a long speech that this is all an invention. I'm sorry. The first speaker is Hermocrates. Hermocrates, a man of the upper class. He occurs in Plato's *Timaeus* and the following dialogues without, however, saying much or anything. And Hermocrates warns of the danger, and Athenagoras contradicts that and says (I exaggerate a little bit): that is just a swindle of the antidemocrats in order to concentrate power in their hands against the demos. And that is developed there.

Now let us see. Hermocrates encourages the Athenians, his fellow citizens . . . he says: Don't worry too much. Even if the Athenians come, Athens began their empire with the success against the Persians. By defeating the Persians at Salamis, she laid the foundation of her naval power. That may happen to us, so don't be afraid. But they may very well come. And the main point is, however, to be awake and to prepare yourselves. And then there comes the speech of the democrat in chapter 35. Let us begin there.

Reader:
As for the people of Syracuse, there were a number of conflicting opinions among them.

[xi] Strauss pronounces the Greek phrase after the British fashion. Thanks to Tobias Joho for this insight, without which the passage is unintelligible.
[xii] The passage in question is Thucydides 6.30.
[xiii] Strauss errs here. *-agoras* ("spokesman for…) was a common element in theophoric names, the character having been dubbed by his parents the spokesman of this or that deity. In this case that deity is obviously Athena. "Spokesman for Athens" would have been at most a pun or play on the name.

LS: People means here the *demos* [δῆμος], ya? The common people. Yes?

Reader:
Some thought that there was no possibility of the Athenians coming and no truth in what Hermocrates had said; others were of opinion that, even if they did come, they could do no harm that would not be paid back to them in full measure; others dismissed the idea altogether and turned the whole thing into a joke. Only a very few believed Hermocrates and felt apprehensive about the future. The leader of the democratic party was Athenagoras, a man who at this time had very great influence with the people. He now came forward and spoke as follows—

LS: Now here we must consider that Hermocrates belonged to the upper class, the . . . class, and probably had better connections to other cities[3] [of] the rest of Greece, better information, than this local yokel, Athenagoras here, who believed that all democrats are as nice democrats as he was, and there he proved to be mistaken. Yes? Now what does Athenagoras say?

Reader:
"Only cowards or people with no sense of patriotism are not anxious for the Athenians to be as mad as they are made out to be, and for them to come here and fall into our power. But as for those who spread such reports and try to scare you with them, I am not surprised at their audacity, but I am surprised at their lack of intelligence, if they imagine that their motives are not perfectly obvious. They have reasons of their own to be frightened, and they want to put the whole city into a state of alarm, so that in the general panic they may disguise their own. So now all these reports mean is this: they have not arisen in the natural way, but have been made up on purpose by certain people who are always starting these agitations. You, if you are sensible, will not take such reports as a basis for calculating probabilities, but instead will consider what a clever what a clever and a widely experienced people, as, in my view, the Athenians are, would be likely to do." (6.36)

LS: So in other words, he, as his name indicates, has a great respect for the Athenians. They are much too intelligent to engage in such a foolish enterprise as the attempt to conquer Sicily.

Reader:
"It is not likely that they would leave the Peloponnesians behind them and, with the war in Hellas still not satisfactorily settled, would go out of their way to take on a new war on just as big a scale."

LS: So he uses an argument already used by Nicias. You know? The Peloponnesian War is still glimmering. It would be simply foolish of the Athenians to expose themselves to new dangers and adventures while that war is still going on. Yes?

Reader:
"In fact I personally am of opinion that they are pleased enough to find that it is not a case of us going to attack them, considering the numbers and the strength of our cities.

"But if they really did come, as they are said to be coming, then I think that Sicily is in a better position than the Peloponnese for going through with the war, because Sicily is better equipped

in every way; and I think that this city of ours is by itself much stronger than their supposed army of invasion, even if it were twice as big as it is said to be. I know certainly that they will not have any horses with them—" (6.36-37)

LS: You see? . . . Keep this always in mind. Ya?

Reader:
"nor will they get any here, except for a few from the Egestaeans; nor will they have a force of hoplites equal to ours, coming, as they will have to do, by sea. In fact it will be a hard enough job for them just to get their ships all this way here, however little they carry. And then there is all the rest of their necessary equipment, and it has to be a lot, considering the size of this city of ours. Indeed, I am so sure of what I say that I think that, even if they brought with them here another city as big as Syracuse and planted it down on our borders and made war from it upon us—even then they would have very little chance of survival; and how much less of a chance will they have with the whole of Sicily united, as it will be, against them—"

LS: Another point which was not made: the whole of Sicily will unite when confronted with the danger of an Athenian invasion, so they don't have a ghost of a chance. Yes?

Reader:
"with their own base a mere fortification thrown up by a naval expedition, living in tents, and only provided with the barest necessities, unable to move in any direction because of our cavalry? Taking everything into account, I doubt whether they will be able to effect and consolidate a landing at all; so very much superior, I think, are our forces to theirs." (6.37)

LS: Yes?

Reader:
"But as I tell you, the Athenians know all this, and I am quite sure that they are occupied in safeguarding their own possessions. What is happening is that there are certain people here in Syracuse who are making up stories which are neither true nor likely to become true. This is not the first time that I have noticed these people; in fact I am constantly aware of them; if foiled in action, they resort to stories of this kind or even more villainous fabrications, and their aim is to make you, the mass of the people, frightened, and so gain control of the government themselves. And I am really afraid that their continual efforts may one day be actually successful. We ourselves are too feeble: we do not forestall them before they act; we do not follow them up with vigour once we have detected them. It is because of this that our city rarely enjoys a period of tranquility, and is involved in continual party strife and struggles more within herself than against the enemy—"

LS: In other words, the proper measure is, to overstate the case a bit, democratic terror (you know?) against these enemies of democracy. Then we will have rest, and then these rumors will be stopped. Yes?

Reader:

"and there have been cases, too, of tyrannies[xiv] and of powerful groups seizing the Government illegally. I shall make it my endeavour, if you will only support me, to see to it that nothing like this is every allowed to happen in our days. And my methods will be to bring you, the masses, over to my way of thought, and then to come down heavily on those who are engaged in these plots, not merely when they are caught in the act (it is not so easy to catch them like that), but also for all those things which they would like to do, but cannot. When dealing with an enemy—"

LS: In other words, don't wait for overt acts: nip it in the bud. That is what terror means.

Reader:
"When dealing with an enemy it is not only his actions but his intentions that have to be watched, since if one does not act first, one will suffer first. And as for those who want an oligarchy, I shall show them up, when necessary, and I shall keep my eye on them, and I shall even be a teacher to them; for so, I think, I shall be most likely to turn them from their wicked path." (6.38)

LS: And that was—the famous terror of Robespierre was of course based on that principle, ya? If you don't show the proper civic spirit, *civisme*, it is a capital crime, and you don't have to wait for overt facts and for the complicated legal procedures. Yes?

Reader:
And now here is a question that I often ask myself: what is it that you young men really want? Is it to hold office immediately? But that is against the law, and the law was not made to keep able people out; it was made simply because you are unfit for office. Is it that you do not want to live on the same terms as everyone else? But members of the same city[xv] ought, in justice, to enjoy the same rights. There are people who will say that democracy is neither an intelligent nor a fair system, and that those who have the money are also the best rulers. But I say, first, that what is meant by the *demos*, or people, is the whole city, whereas an oligarchy is only a section of the city; and I say next that though the rich are the best people for looking after money, the best counselors are the intelligent, and that it is the many who are best at listening to the different arguments and judging between them. And all alike, whether taken all together or as separate classes, have equal rights in a democracy. An oligarchy, on the other hand, certainly gives the many their share of dangers, but when it comes to the good things of life not only claims the largest share, but goes off with the whole lot. And this is what the rich men and the young men among you are aiming at; but in a great city these things are beyond your reach." (6.38-39)

LS: Ya, this is *the* democratic argument in Thucydides—not in the funeral speech, but this one! [LS raps on the table for emphasis] It must be kept in mind. This is usually not considered; when people consider the problem of democracy in Thucydides, they think of Pericles's speech. But Pericles was—and Thucydides says there that the regime was called in name a democracy, but in fact it was the rule of the first man, namely, the most outstanding man: Pericles. And Athenagoras is speaking about democracy in general. And if I would ever have written a

[xiv] Warner has "dictatorships."
[xv] Warner has "State," as is the case in other instances in this passage when the reader reads "city."

textbook for political theory, I would have inserted this section. Perhaps one of you will do it one day. Yes?

Student: I was also struck by your remark that the *demos* represents the whole city.

LS: Ya.

Same Student: I mean, usually one likes to make a contrast between, say, *demos*, or let's say the word "people" as it is used in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and the word "people" as it is used in the Preamble to the Constitution. In the Preamble to the Constitution, I think "people" does mean everyone, as it is used in, say, *Julius Caesar* or *Coriolanus*, and as it is used mostly in Aristotle, it means . . .

LS: Not all—in Aristotle I don't have the statistic, but I would say *demos* means—the ambiguity is old. For example, when one says, *senatus populusque Romanus*, the Roman Senate and People, then it means the senate, of course, and the people, but the people, the assembly of the people of which the nobility is also a part. It's only not limited to people who have had high office, like the senators. And this ambiguity is old. And if the usage is in Shakespeare, this definitely only would show the power of empire or nondemocratic notions in this particular . . . place, ya? I mean, I simply do not have the facts. And if the free citizens, the sons of citizen-fathers and citizen-mothers, as Aristotle calls it, they are of course members of the citizen body, and they must have their say. And their say is limited; they are rather poor. In other words, if they don't have clients or hangers-on or . . . however you call them. Debtors. You know that this kind of dependence affects democracy, that goes without saying. But the *demos* can very well mean the whole citizen body, and only the context qualifies it, then it may mean, for example, as in Thucydides too, *ho demos* [ὁ δῆμος] and *hoi dunatoi* [οἱ δυνατοί], "the *demos*" and "the powerful ones," and the *demos* are the non-powerful members.

Reader: Continue with this?

LS: Ya. Ya.

Reader:
"What fools you are! In fact the stupidest of all the Hellenes I know, if you do not realize that your aims are evil, and the biggest criminals if you do realize this and still have the face to proceed with them. But there is still time for you, if not to repent, at any rate to become instructed and to promote the interests of your country that are shared by all your countrymen. Remember that by so doing the good citizens among you will get not only a fair, but more than a fair share, whereas if you have other ends in view you run the risk of being deprived of everything. Give up spreading these rumours and understand that we know what the idea is and we are not going to put up with it. Even if the Athenians are on their way, this city of ours will deal with them in a manner worthy of herself; and we have our generals who will attend to all this. And if, as I think myself, there is no truth at all in these reports, the city is not going to be thrown into a panic by the rumours you spread and cast itself into a voluntary slavery by choosing you to be its rulers. The city is capable of looking into things by itself, and it will judge the words you speak as though they were positive actions; it will not be robbed by hearsay of the

liberty it now enjoys, but will try to preserve that liberty by taking practical steps to prevent any such thing happening." (6.40)

LS: Ya. Now continue.

Reader:
This was the speech of Athenagoras. One of the generals then stood up and refused to allow any other speakers to come forward. He spoke himself on the situation as follows: "It is not a wise thing either for speakers to make these attacks on each other, or for the hearers to give countenance to them. Instead we should be giving our attention to the reports which have reached us and seeing how we can all of us—the city as a whole and each individual in it—best deal with the invaders. Even if there is no need, there is no harm in having the city[xvi] furnished with horses and arms and everything that is glorious in war. We shall undertake the responsibility for this and see to the details. Nor is there any harm in sending to the cities to find out what their feelings are and in doing anything else that may be thought useful. We have seen to some of these matters already, and anything that we find out shall be brought to your notice."

After this speech from the general, the Syracusans dissolved the assembly. (6.41)

LS: So in other words, the general spoke sense. Ya? Let's be watchful and let's be prepared, and let us not get into an angry mood against one another by the fact that one part is what they call optimistic and the other part is pessimistic. The Athenians may come, but they may also be reasonable enough not to come.

Mrs. Kaplan: I think the speech of Athenagoras is very curious in one way . . . by intentions, what they are intending to do, and not by action . . . Well, it is very contemporary, it is probably because military forces judge this way, even in contemporary newspaper, you always read: what are the intentions of fractions supposed fractions, or what are their actions? Actions are that way, or intentions that way. What should we do: to prepare ourselves for their intentions or to prepare ourselves for their actions?

LS: Ya.

Mrs. Kaplan: And this is the same—I'm sorry, I only want to say that it is curious in a way how judgment in this situation repeats itself. This whole speech is built, is not believing that Athens would go for such an illogical, impossible war.

LS: Ya. But they do, and they almost win the war.

Mrs. Kaplan: What?

LS: The Athenians come and they almost win.

Mrs. Kaplan: Yeah, but he, Athenagoras, thought it is impossible . . .

[xvi] Warner has "State."

LS: Ya.

Mrs. Kaplan: . . .

LS: Ya, but that was—

Mrs. Kaplan: and he was mistaken . . .

LS: He was blinded by his notion of democracy.

Mrs. Kaplan: Yeah.

LS: He thought that all democrats must be such nice people as the Syracusan democrats.

Mrs. Kaplan: And probably this is the eternal mistake of the military man: intention or action. If they judge what is intentional . . .

LS: Not always. I mean, generals are being *paid* for being distrustful. There are also people—you have seen this in the controversy between the hawkish and dovish generals, that that there are some who did not believe in this. And even today there are quite a few people, generals, who don't believe that Russia sees the intents to destroy China's nuclear armament in advance. Also, I mean, I have no judgment, but it is hard question.

Mrs. Kaplan: Certainly the general who finished this . . .

LS: He he was sensible. Ya, but his intervention became necessary because of the disagreement among the citizens, among democracies and Athenagoras. Otherwise the whole—his speech would not make sense.

Mrs. Kaplan: But in the deep sense, Athenagoras was too right, because the action of Athenians was really neither wise nor—how to say it? It was the move by Alcibiades, the whole thing . . . not wise decision.

LS: Ya, but let us assume for a moment that the enemies of Alcibiades would not have had their say in Athens, and Alcibiades would have remained practically in sole control of the expedition, God knows what would have happened. Thucydides indicates in the sixty-fifth chapter of the second book that this might have succeeded.

Mrs. Kaplan: Might have, might have.

LS: Ya.

Mrs. Kaplan: There is chance always in war.

LS: Ya. Not only that, but Alcibiades was a shrewd strategist and a shrewd judge of the powers with . . . Now let us see whether there is still anything which follows . . . No, the Alcibiades story

continues only in chapter 53, and in the meantime there are some other things—we will read that next time. Now are there any other points you would like to raise?

Student: Would you say something about the difference between the Athenian democracy and Syracusan democracy? It seems strange, for example, that the very arguments that are used by Athenagoras to persuade the Syracusan *demos* that the Athenians are not coming seem to be used by Nicias in Athens to attempt to persuade the Athenian *demos* not to go to Syracuse. And if they fail in Athens, they succeed, at least partially succeed, in Syracuse. And I was wondering if that is something that reflects the particular character of the city.

LS: Ya, apparently Syracuse, at least the Syracusan democrats were less, shall I say visionary, shall I say ambitious, than the Athenian democrats. I mean, the conquest of Carthage, the whole of Sicily, which was envisaged by Alcibiades—nothing of this kind was envisaged by the Sicilian democrats.

Student: Is that—?

LS: Athens was really guided by this hope or this Fata Morgana of immortal fame, perhaps acquired at the price of the destruction of Athens. Nothing—they were more sober in Sicily, more sober, more luxury-loving, and so on.

Same Student: Is that difference reflected in the difference on the one hand between Alcibiades, between the spokesman in a way for the Athenian *demos* in his concern with war and foreign policy, and on the other hand Athenagoras, the spokesman for the Syracusan *demos*, who is clearly concerned with as you said luxury and—

LS: Ya, that's not so simple, because in Athens, one of the leaders of the *demos* whom we have met, is Cleon, and Cleon also had rather fantastic notions of what Athens could do, but he was disposed of by being killed in battle also . . . But there were no men like Pericles and Alcibiades in Syracuse. The famous men in Sicily were some tyrants, you know, not democrats.[xvii]

[xvii] But what of Hermocrates himself? Is he not a man "like Pericles and Alcibiades," i.e., a great statesman with lofty ambitions of playing Themistocles to a nascent Syracusian empire (Cf. Thucydides 6.33.5-6)?

Session 13: no date
Book 6, chapters 54-88

Leo Strauss: [In Progress] —at the beginning, although they occur time and again. The first is the neglect by the Athenians of the cavalry, and so that they are exposed to the Syracusan cavalry attack on their communications and on their sustenance, and the second is that the Athenians somehow count on the racial antagonism within Sicily, and in this they are also disappointed. These are the first crucial things which come out right at the beginning before it comes to any battle.

Now shortly after the landing in Sicily, there is a deliberation of the three Athenian generals: Nicias, Alcibiades, and Lamachus. Each has a different plan, but Alcibiades wins out because Lamachus gives in. That is told in chapters 46 following. The remarkable thing is that these plans are *reported* by Thucydides, they are not quoted. You see this in chapters 46 to 48. The question of course arises: Why are they not quoted? And we must face this question sooner or later, but at this situation—this situation where the strategy to be followed is not yet clear because of the dissension of the generals—Alcibiades is recalled in connection with this uproar in Athens because of the mutilation of the Hermae as divulger of the mysteries. And here Thucydides goes out of the way in order to explain why this happening had such a terrific effect, and it had something to do with [the] Athenians' fear of tyranny. That is presented in chapters 53 to 55. And perhaps we read that in chapter 53. I think we haven't—or did we discuss it last time? I don't think so.

Reader: No.

LS: 53.

Reader: Shall I read it?

LS: Ya. Let us begin with chapter 54. It's simpler. Well, one can say the story which Thucydides tells concerns *the* democratic myth about the abolition of tyranny in Athens, and he has his version. Please.

Reader:
In fact the bold action undertaken by Aristogeiton and Harmodius was due to a love affair. I shall deal with this in some detail, and show that the Athenians themselves are no better than other people at producing accurate information about their own tyrants[i]—

LS: The only thing I have to say in respect of the text is that the "I"—"*I* will say," "*I* will show," is underlined. In Greek, as you may know, one doesn't have to express the personal pronoun. The word comes out through the ending, but if you want to emphasize it, you add the personal pronoun: *egô apophanô* [ἔγω ἀποφανῶ], "*I* will do that." That is Thucydides's *own* contribution. Yes?

[i] Warner has "dictators."

Reader:
about their own tyrants and the facts of their own history. Pisistratus was an old man when he died, still holding the tyranny.[ii] After him it was not Hipparchus, as most people think, but Hippias, the eldest, who took over power. Harmodius was then a most beautiful young man in the flower of his youth, and was loved and possessed by Aristogiton, a citizen who belonged to the middle class. Harmodius was approached, though without success, by Hipparchus, the son of Pisistratus, and he told Aristogiton of this, who, being in love as he was, was greatly upset and was afraid that Hipparchus, with all his power, might take Harmodius by force. He therefore began at once, so far as he could in his position, to plot to overthrow the tyranny. Meanwhile Hipparchus made another attempt, equally unsuccessful, to seduce Harmodius. Afterwards he had no intention of using force, but planned to insult him somehow in a way which would not reveal his real motives for doing so. Indeed, he exercised his authority in a manner that was easy for people to bear and ruled without making himself hated. These particular tyrants, in fact, showed for a very long time both high principles and intelligence in their policy. The taxes they imposed on the Athenians were only a twentieth of their incomes, yet they greatly improved the appearance of their city, carried through their wars successfully, and made all the proper religious sacrifices. In all other respects the city was still governed by the laws which had existed previously, except that they took care to see that there was always one of their own family in office. Among those of them who held the yearly office of archon in Athens was the son of the tyrant Hippias, who was called Pisistratus after his grandfather. It was he who, in his year of office, dedicated the altar of the twelve gods, which is in the market-place, and the altar of Apollo in the Pythium. Later the altar in the market-place was extended to a greater length by the Athenian people and the inscription was obliterated. But one can still read in faded letters the inscription on the altar in the Pythium, which is as follows:

Hippias' son, Pisistratus, set up this record of office,
Here on the holy ground sacred to Pythian Apollo.

As for the fact that Hippias was the eldest son and the one who held power, this is something which I assert confidently on the basis of more accurate information than others possess. (6.54-55)

LS: It's important, ya? That is, we have here private information, possibly based on oral family tradition, which Thucydides has and others did not have. And it is of course always a dangerous thing in a democracy, as Athens then was, to speak up in favor of tyranny. And this leads to this very great question: Athens, a tyrant city, she is called, and what about the individual tyrant? Is there no connection between the two things? That remains a question, and comes up only here. Ya. Now we don't have to read everything, only perhaps at the end of this whole section. Well, the murder takes place—the tyranny is quite bloodthirsty, naturally. The end is interesting, at the end of chapter 59. Ya?

Reader: Does this include the inscription on the tomb?

[ii] Warner has "dictatorship." Throughout the passage, where the reader reads "tyrant" or "tyranny," Warner has "dictator" or "dictatorship." The reader is correcting for this dubious choice of Warner, since the Greek original reads *tyrannos* and *tyrannis.*

LS: No.

Reader: After that?

LS: No, we don't need that.

Reader:
Hippias held the tyranny[iii] at Athens for three more years, and in the fourth year was deposed by the Spartans and the exiled Alcmaeonids. He was then given a safe conduct to Sigeum and went on to Aeantides at Lampsacus, and from there to the Court of King Darius. Twenty years later in his old age he set out from there with the Persians on the expedition to Marathon. (6.59)

LS: You see, he was also a kind of traitor, according to the popular notion, being in the Persian camp at the time of Marathon. We must keep this in mind when we hear the story of Themistocles. So the loyalties are very confused. You know? That the tyrant, the last tyrant of Athens was a Medizer, as he was called—a collaborator with the Medes. I think we must keep this in mind in order to have a proper judgment of the whole situation. Thucydides had spoken of this affair already at the beginning, in book 1, chapter 20. If you will be so good as to read the beginning of book 1, chapter 20.

Reader:
In investigating past history, and in forming the conclusions which I have formed, it must be admitted that one cannot rely on every detail which has come down to us by way of tradition. People are inclined to accept all stories of ancient times in an uncritical way—even when these stories concern their own native countries. Most people in Athens, for instance, are under the impression that Hipparchus, who was killed by Harmodius and Aristogiton, was tyrant at the time, not realizing that it was Hippias who was the eldest and the chief of the sons of Pisistratus, and that Hipparchus and Thessalus were his younger brothers. What happened was this: on the very day that had been fixed for their attempt, indeed at the very last moment, Harmodius and Aristogeiton had reason to believe that Hippias had been informed of the plot by some of the conspirators. Believing him to have been forewarned, they kept away from him, but, as they wanted to perform some daring exploit before they were arrested themselves, they killed Hipparchus when they found him by the Leocorium organizing the Panathenaeic procession. (1.20)

LS: Now that's all. So in other words, Thucydides had said right at the beginning, "this is an interesting example of popular erroneous notions," and had given the outline of it, but the details he gives only in book 6 in the proper place, so there's no contradiction here in any way. It is only—it is an outstanding example and therefore mentioned in book 1, but the development of the example is given later in the proper place in connection with the Alcibiades story, where people, the Athenian *demos* had the fear of tyranny, and therefore regarded it as possible that such a man as Alcibiades *might* have perhaps such vicious intentions.

Ya. Now we go on where we left in book 6, and there is first a battle near Syracuse in which Nicias is in command, and there is a speech before the battle in chapters 67 to 68. And that is a

[iii] Warner has "dictatorship."

perfectly normal speech without any particular interest from our point of view, no mention of gods, and he speaks of the hope of victory, the military superiority of the Athenians and their allies. And the danger comes not from the military posture of the enemies but from the Athenians' exposure in Sicily, meaning especially to cavalry attack. So then the battle is described in chapter 69; there is some slight difference from other battles which we might mention. [Chapter] 69, paragraph 2, and "first, the stone-throwers and slingers." Do you have that passage?

Reader: Yes.
First the stone-throwers, slingers, and archers on both sides engaged each other in front of the main lines of battle, with now one party and now another having the advantage, as is normal with these light troops. Then soothsayers brought forward the usual victims for sacrifices and trumpeters sounded the charge to the hoplites. So— (6.69)

LS: Ya. That is ordinarily not mentioned in Athenian battles, but here, where Nicias is in sole command, the situation is somewhat different. But even here the soothsayers are mentioned in the second place. First the beginning of battle is purely military, and then this ritual comes in in the second place. And the next chapter, 70.

Reader:
The armies now came to close quarters, and for some time no ground was yielded on either side. Meanwhile there were some claps of thunder and flashes of lightning with heavy rain, all of which added to the fears of the Syracusans, who were fighting their first battle and had very little familiarity with war, while in the more experienced ranks of their enemies these events were regarded merely as what might be expected at this time of year, and what really caused apprehension was the fact that the Syracusans were resisting so long without giving in. (6.70)

LS: Ya. So in other words, natural events complicate matters for the Syracusans because of their lack of experience. The Athenians, who had made this experience before were in no way disturbed. But although the Athenians had won the battle, they cannot pursue the defeated Syracusans because of their lack of cavalry. So this is really a leitmotif of the whole Sicilian expedition, the absence of Athenian cavalry. Let us read the end of chapter 70 and the beginning of chapter 71.

Reader:
The Syracusan army was now cut in two and took to flight. The Athenians did not pursue them far. They were prevented from doing so by the numbers of still undefeated Syracusan cavalry who charged and drove back any of the hoplites whom they saw pressing the pursuit in advance of the rest. Nevertheless they followed up the enemy as far as it was safe to do so in compact bodies, and then returned to their own lines and put up a trophy.

The Syracusans rallied together again at the road to Helorus, formed up as well as they could under the circumstances, and even sent a garrison of their own citizens to the Olympieium, since they were afraid that the Athenians might make off with some of the treasure there. The rest of them went back again to the city. The Athenians did not go to the temple; they collected their

dead, put them on a pyre, and camped there for the night. Next day they gave the Syracusans back their dead under an armistice. (6.70-71)

LS: Stop here. Now in the introductory note by the French editor and translator Mme de Romilly, she says, "there are imperfections in detail one can understand still less by the Athenians. After they elaborated the more consistent plan in order to assure for themselves for the future a basis at the Olympieium, the sanctuary of the Olympian gods, they abandon their plan without any further ado after having won the victory."[iv] Ya. Well, something happened with a sanctuary before which the Athenians had occupied, and with disastrous results. That was the sanctuary of Apollo in Delium. You know that battle where Socrates was allegedly present, and this would seem to me a perfectly—that must have given them quite a shock, that one shouldn't occupy a sanctuary and use it for military purposes. But this only in passing. I believe that there is a connection with that. We might also read the end of this chapter which we began, 71.

Reader:
They did this because it was now winter and they thought that they were not yet in a position to carry on the war from their base before Syracuse. [That is, they sailed back to Naxos—Reader] First, cavalry would have to be sent for from Athens and collected form their allies in Sicily if they were not to be completely outclassed in this respect; money also must be procured in Sicily and sent to them from Athens; some of the cities, which they hoped would now after the battle be more likely to listen to them, must be won over to their side, and corn and all other things necessary must be provided with a view to making the attack on Syracuse in the spring. So, with these plans in mind, the Athenians sailed back to Naxos and Catana. (6.71)

LS: And so on. So in other words, not in any way decisive action is taken. And that corresponds to the style of Nicias. Much more energetic people, Lamachus and especially Alcibiades, would not have waited so long. But remember how Lamachus had already fallen,[v] and Alcibiades had to leave because he was prosecuted. What follows next in chapter 72 is a speech in the Syracusan assembly. The speech is not quoted, but reported. The chief speaker is again Hermocrates, of whom we have read before, and he demands that there will be newly-elected generals who should swear a certain oath, and there should be a unitary command and of course unitary action against the Athenians. Ya?

Student: At the beginning of chapter 72, Thucydides calls attention to the, in my translation, the intelligence of Hermocrates.

LS: Oh ya! There is no doubt that he was the victor of Syracuse as far as any Sicilian could be called the victor, you know, because the Spartans sent a large armament there under Gylippus, which probably decided the issue. But as far as it was dependent on any Syracusan, it was Hermocrates.

[iv] *Thucydide*, *La Guerre du Péloponnèse, Livres VI et VII,* texte établi et traduit par Jacqueline de Romilly et Louis Bodin (Paris : « Les Belles Lettres, » 1963, xxv. Strauss translates from Mme de Romilly's French.

[v] Lamachus will fall only in a later engagement (6.101.6).

Same Student: In our earlier reading, Nicias—it seemed that Nicias was not known for his intellectual power. He was somehow limited in his flexibility and his—

LS: Ya. Ya, I mean, because Hermocrates was really a militarily gifted man to a much higher degree than Nicias. That, I think, is not contradicted here by what we read here.

Student: Hermocrates though is later—if I remember correctly, Hermocrates is taken out of the position of being general and replaced. He and the other two generals are replaced, aren't they, by three others after the Syracusans—

LS: You mean in the battle in the harbor? Ya, but still, that was nevertheless—the battle in the harbor was arranged according to his plan because there the Athenians could not move properly with their ships. It was too small for them, too narrow. The fact that here, as well as other occasions in this neighborhood, there are no references to the gods I believe can be explained as follows: that later on, when the going gets rough or tough and the Athenians approach defeat, then Nicias comes to the fore with his piety. And there with constant reference to gods, and therefore the *silence* about gods here is as it were a foil to Nicias's speaking about the gods. Now in 74, and let us read chapter 74 now because there is the first action of Alcibiades after his flight.

Reader:
The Athenian forces in Catana sailed at once to Messina in the hope that the place was going to be betrayed to them, but the plan came to nothing. This was because Alcibiades, when he laid down his command after his recall and realized that he was going to be exiled, had given information about the plot, in which he was concerned himself, to the pro-Syracusan party in Messina. They had put the leading conspirators to death even before the Athenians arrived, and now in the general disturbance the same party rose up in arms, and so succeeded in keeping the Athenians out. For about thirteen days the Athenians stayed there; then, since they were exposed to the weather and short of supplies and meeting with no success, they went back to Naxos, where they built sheds for the storage of equipment, surrounded their camp with a palisade, and so passed the winter. They sent a trireme to Athens for money and for cavalry to be with them in the spring. (6.74)

LS: Ya. So ihere is the first action of Alcibiades and he spoils an Athenian intrigue which might have been very helpful for the Athenian success. So. And now we come to an exchange of speeches in another Sicilian city, called Camarina, in chapter 75 to 87, and I believe we should read that. At the end of 75, near the end of 75. Now after Hermocrates and others having come to Camarina. Do you have that?

Reader:
after they saw that the Athenians had been successful in the battle they might in future refuse to give them any more help, and instead join the Athenians on the basis of their former friendship with them. [That is, the Camarinaeans.—Reader] Hermocrates was one of those who came from Syracuse to Camarina, and on the Athenian side there were Euphemus and others. An assembly

of the Camarinaeans was held, and Hermocrates, wishing to make his attack on the Athenians first, spoke about[vi] as follows. (6.75)

LS: So we have here the two opponents, Hermocrates speaking for the Syracusans and Euphemus speaking for the Athenians, and we must see how they will argue. Yes? And of course, again not reported but quoted, but not literally. "He said *about* this," *toiade* [τοιάδε]. Ya?

Reader:
"Camarinaeans, we did not come on this mission because we were afraid that the forces which the Athenians have could frighten you; it was more the words that they were going to speak which made us fear that they might convince you before you had had an opportunity of hearing what we have to say on our side. The reasons they put forward for being here in Sicily are known to you, but we all have a suspicion of what their real intentions are. In my opinion what they want to do is not so much to give Leontini back what was hers as to take away from us what is ours." (6.76)

LS: You know, the Leontini and Egesta, the fight of these two cities in the northwest of Sicily was the pretext of the Athenian expedition.[vii] Yes?

Reader:
"Certainly it is scarcely logical for them to be destroying cities in Hellas and restoring cities in Sicily, to be showing all this care for the Leontinians, who are Chalcidians, because of their racial connection with them and meanwhile to be holding down in subjection the actual inhabitants of Chalcis in Euboea—" (6.76)

LS: Ya, that is a great theme, the racial antagonism within Sicily. And the Athenians come to the help of their kinsmen, the Chalcidians, but the very same kinsmen in Euboea, i.e., near Athens, are subjugated by the Athenians. That's the first argument of Hermocrates. Yes?

Reader:
"The fact is that just as they won an empire in Hellas, so they are trying to win another one here, and by exactly the same methods. The alliance of Ionians and others racially connected with Athens voluntarily accepted Athenian leadership in the war to get their own back from Persia; but the Athenians deprived them all of their independence, accusing some of failure to fulfil their military obligations, some of fighting among themselves, bringing forward, in fact, any plausible excuse to fit each particular case. So, in making this stand against Persia, Athens was not fighting for the freedom of Hellas, nor were the Hellenes fighting for their own; what Athens wanted was to substitute her own empire for that of Persia, and the other Hellenes were simply fighting to get themselves a new master whose intelligence was not less but who made a much more evil use of it than did the old." (6.76)

[vi] "About" is not in the original.

[vii] The quarrel in the northwest of Sicily was between Egesta, which called in the Athenians, and its neighbor Selinus. Leontini, which was located in the southests of Sicily, summoned the help of the Athenians because of its fear of encroachment by its neighbor Syracuse. There was no quarrel between the geographically distant Egesta and Leontini. Elsewhere Strauss gets this right.

LS: So you see he absolutely denies any merit of Athens in the Persian War, and any claim based on that alleged merit. Yes?

Reader:
"However, there is plenty of scope for attacking the record of a city like Athens, and we have not come here now to tell you the story of her misdoings; you know them already. What is more to the point is to blame ourselves. We have in front of us the example of the Hellenes in the mother country who have been enslaved through not supporting each other; we now find the Athenians employing the same sophistries against us—restoration of their kinsmen of Leontini, military aid to their allies of Egesta—yet we are not prepared to unite and resolutely make it clear to them that what they have to deal with here is not Ionians, Hellespontians, and islanders who may change masters, but are always slaves either to the Persians or to someone else, but free Dorians from the independent Peloponnese living in Sicily." (6.77)

LS: So in other words, he accepts the racial point of view, but he says it speaks against the Athenians. Yes?

Reader:
"Are we waiting until we are taken over separately, city by city, though we are well aware that this is the only chance they have of conquering us and we see that this is just a method they are adopting—sometimes trying to create dissension among us by their arguments, sometimes stirring up wars among us by holding out hopes of an alliance with them—doing, in fact, all the harm they can by using the most flattering language possible on every particular occasion? And when fellow Sicilians who live at a distance from us are destroyed first, do we imagine that the danger will not come to each of us in our turn or that misfortunes will be confined to those who suffer before our turn is reached?" (6.77)

LS: That reminds of the argument used against Hitler in the Second World War or before the Second World War. One at a time. Ya? One is to say Czechoslovakia, or whatever the country was, and the others don't care! Now how did they say, the French, in the case of Yugoslavia? You could show us. That is the affair of the Yugoslavians. And just as at that time it was argued on the other side that the fate of Yugoslavia, or Czechoslovakia, or Poland, is in store for all others—their turn comes—the same is what Hermocrates says here regarding the Athenians. The Athenians have a very definite policy aiming at the subjugation of Sicily as a whole, and the nice phrases about racial kinship mean nothing. Yes?

Reader:
"Some of you may have the idea that it is Syracuse, not Camarina, which is the enemy of Athens, and may object to running risks for my country. Anyone who thinks like this must remember that if he fights in my country he will be fighting just as much for his own country as for mine, and will be all the safer in having me as his ally and not having to fight alone, as he would have to do if I were destroyed first. Let him remember, too, that what Athens is aiming at is not so much to punish the hostility of Syracuse as to secure the friendship of Camarina by using us Syracusans as a pretext. And if anyone envies us or even fears us (and superior powers are both envied and feared), and because of this wants Syracuse to be weakened in order to make us less arrogant, but still to survive for the sake of his own security, then he is wanting something which is not

humanly possible. One cannot regulate fortune to fit in with what one has decided one wants to happen. And if his calculations went wrong, he would soon have miseries of his own to bewail, and would very probably be wishing that he could once again be envying my prosperity. Yet that will be impossible if he abandons us now and refuses to take his share in the dangers which, whatever may be said, do in fact threaten him just as much as us. It may be said that he would be fighting to preserve our power, but in reality it would be for his own survival." (6.78)

LS: So in other words, one can understand that motivation, but one cannot avoid that danger. If the Syracusans are defeated, then they will become the subjects of Athens. If the Syracusans win, the Syracusans will assert their power and the other Sicilians will be the subjects of the Syracusans. Then nothing can be done about that. It leads up to this conclusion. If one is not strong, one cannot be independent, except by some accident, if you live in an inaccessible poor mountain valley for which no one has any desire, then people let you go. . . . won't work. Yes?

Reader:
"One would have thought that you Camarinaeans would have been most likely people of all to have foreseen this, considering that you are on our boundaries and are next on the danger list. One would have expected that instead of giving us the half-hearted support which you are giving, it would rather have been the case that you would have come to us of your own accord and, just as you would have asked for our help if the Athenians had attacked Camarina first, so now you would be openly urging us not to make any concessions to the enemy. As it happens, however, no such vigorous action has yet been taken either by you or by the rest. (6.78)

"It may be that out of cowardice you will attempt to do the right thing both by us and by the invaders, and will say that you have an alliance with the Athenians. But this alliance was made by you not against your friends, but against any enemies that might attack you, and as for the Athenians, you were only bound to help them when they were the victims of aggression, not when, as now, they are the aggressors against your neighbours. Even the people of Rhegium, in spite of being Chalcidians, refuse to help restore their fellow Chalcidians of Leontini. It would be strange if they were to show such an illogical degree of common sense in seeing the real meaning of the apparently fair claims made upon them, while you, with logic as your pretext, should prefer to assist those who are by nature hostile to you, and should turn against your own kinsfolk, helping their bitterest enemies to destroy them." (6.79)

LS: Ya, that "you wish to help those who are enemies, your enemies by nature and destroy those who are your kin by nature." That is a very strong expression for the racial difference between the Ionians and the Dorians. So this theme goes through the whole speech. Yes?

Reader:
"This is certainly not doing the right thing. Instead of this, you should be helping us, and you ought not to be afraid of their fleet and army; there is nothing there to be frightened of so long as we all stand together, but only if we fail to do this and drift apart—which is just what they are trying to bring about. You saw that even when they came against us by ourselves and defeated us in battle they failed to achieve their objects and had to retire at once. (6.79)

LS: Namely, in this battle which they won under Nicias. And where he admits they were defeated, doesn't deny obvious facts, doesn't do a . . . as they called it in 1967. But he doesn't give of course the reason, namely, the absence of Athenian cavalry. Ya?

Reader:
"There is therefore no reason for despondency so long as we stick together, and every reason for us to join wholeheartedly in the alliance, especially as help is coming to us from the Peloponnesians, who in military affairs are better than the Athenians in every way. And no one ought to think that it is either fair to us or safe for you to adopt the cautious policy of saying that you are allies of both sides and therefore will help neither one nor the other. It may look legally fair, but in fact it is not. If the defeat of the conquered and the victory of the conquerors comes from your not joining in the struggle, then the positive result of your inaction has been that you have failed to help one side to safety and allowed the other to proceed unchecked on a course of evil. Surely the honourable thing to do is this—to come to the side of the victims of aggression, who are also of the same blood as you are, and so to defend the common interests of Sicily and prevent your Athenian friends from doing wrong.

"This, finally, is what we Syracusans say: there is no point in our going into careful explanations either with you or with the rest about things which you know just as well as we do; we entreat you, however, and, if our appeal fails, we most solemnly protest that, while the Ionians, our perpetual foes, are plotting against us, you, our fellow Dorians, are betraying us. If the Athenians conquer us, they will owe the achievement to your decision, but will receive the credit for it themselves, and will take as the prize of victory the very people who helped them to win it. If, on the other hand, the victory goes to us, you will scarcely escape paying the penalty for having been the cause of our danger. Think carefully, therefore, and now make your choice: you may either run no risks and become slaves at once, or else, standing together with us, you may save yourselves, and so both avoid the disgrace of being dominated by the Athenians and escape the lasting hatred which otherwise we should feel for you." (6.80)

LS: So he does, of course, end with a threat. He had spoken formally in his earlier speech about the fact that every imperial power will use its power for aggrandizement, and that is human nature. You remember? In the former speech, in Gela. And so that is is the background for what he says here, although he doesn't say it here.

So Hermocrates has made it perfectly clear: the Camarinaeans must not help the Athenians in any way: they will suffer terribly in either case, either from the Athenians if the Athenians win, or from the Syracusans, who will avenge themselves on them if they win. Now what can the Athenian reply? The Athenian comes next in chapter 81 following, and he has the name Euphemus. One knows nothing of him. The name is a perfectly correctly formulated name, but it has something in common with "euphemism." You know? It is a euphemistic speech. Now let us see what he is going to say.

Reader:
"The reason we came here was to renew the formal alliance, but now after—"[viii]

[viii] The tape was chnged at this point.

LS: —Pericles, and with Themistocles. Euphemus doesn't mention him. That may be part of the euphemism, because Themistocles stood for the beginning of the Athenian empire. Yes?

Reader:
"while these subjects of ours harmed us by being just as ready to act in the service of Persia, partly because we wanted to have the strength to hold our own in relation to the Peloponnesians. We are not making any dramatic statements such as that we have a right to rule because single-handed we overthrew the foreign invader, or that the risks we took were for the liberty of these subjects of ours any more than for the liberty of everyone, ourselves included; no one can be blamed for looking after his own safety in his own way. So now it is for our own security that we are in Sicily, and we see that here your interests are the same as ours. This we—'" [chap. 83]

LS: So in other words, he's honest. We are here on the side of interest, and no one can be blamed for that. Yes?

Reader:
"This we can prove from what the Syracusans are saying against us and from the suspicions of us which you yourselves, in your rather over-anxious mood, no doubt entertain; because we know that when people are frightened and suspicious they enjoy for the moment an argument that fits in with their feelings, but in the end, when it comes to the point, they act in accordance with their interests.

"We have told you that it is because of fear that we hold our empire in Hellas, and it is also because of fear that we have come here to settle matters for our own security, together with our friends; not to enslave anybody, but rather to prevent anybody from being enslaved." (6.83)

LS: So in other words, the somewhat ambiguous word "security" is now replaced by the much less ambiguous word "fear." And since we act from fear, we act innocuously. This was also mentioned before in an earlier speech by the Athenians in Sparta, and we might very well look up that passage. Book 1, chapter 75, paragraph 3.

Reader:
"At this time our allies came to us of their own accord and begged us to lead them. It was the actual course of events which first compelled us to increase our power to its present extent: fear of Persia was our chief motive, though afterwards we thought, too, of our own honour and our own utility.[ix] Finally there came a time when we were surrounded by enemies, when we had already crushed some revolts, when you had lost the friendly feelings that you used to have for us and had turned against us and begun to arouse our suspicion: at this point it was clearly no longer safe for us to risk letting our empire go, especially as any allies that left us would go over to you. And when tremendous dangers are involved no one can be blamed for looking to his own interest."

LS: So here there were three motives mentioned: fear, interest, and glory or honor. And in the context, this is in order of rank. Fear is the most unquestionable motive, most justifiable motive, and glory or honor the least, because that leads into infinite provisos. But interest mediates

[ix] Warner has "own interest."

somehow between the two: if you are in fear of a mighty neighbor, of a potentially mighty neighbor, then you enlarge your goals, and that is your interest. And here Euphemus, loyal to his name, puts all the emphasis on fear, and that cannot be blamed. Yes? Chapter 84.

Reader:
"No one must imagine that the interest which we take in you has nothing to do with ourselves. You have only to reflect that so long as you are safe and strong enough to hold your own against Syracuse, the Syracusans will not find it so easy to do us harm by sending a force to help the Peloponnesians. Therefore what you do concerns us very much indeed. On the same principle it is perfectly reasonable for us to restore their independence to the people of Leontini and, so far from making them our subjects like their kinsmen in Euboea, to see that they are as powerful as possible, so that they may help us by being a source of irritation to Syracuse, planted on her frontiers and based on their own territory." (6.84)

LS: So in other words, they are not disloyal to their race by subjugating their kinsmen in Italy[x] because in Sicily the subjugation of the Chalcidians is useful to Athens,[xi] whereas the subjugation of the same in—

Student: They're subjugated in Euboea, but left free in Sicily.

LS: Ya. Because in Euboea that is too close to home, but there in Sicily we have an interest, because they would act as enemies of the Syracusans, which is to the interest of Athens. So not racial business but *Realpolitik*, or however you might call it, is the rule. Yes?

Reader:
"In Hellas we are strong enough in ourselves to deal with our enemies, and when the Syracusan representative says that it is illogical for us to enslave Chalcidians in Hellas and liberate them in Sicily, he should remember that it is to our interest that in Hellas they should be unarmed and should merely contribute money, but here in Sicily we should like to see both the people of Leontini and all our other friends as independent as possible. When a man or a city exercises absolute power the logical course is the course of self-interest—" (6.84-85)

LS: Ya, well, more literally translated, "for a tyrannical man or a city possessing an empire, there is nothing unreasonable that is conducive to his interest." So in other words, the situation, and the imperial power and the tyrant are in the same position: Athens is the tyrant city, as Pericles had said . . . before, and Cleon also, and even Euphemus in his euphemistic speech cannot deny it. And everything else is implied, so that the Melian dialogue is only an extreme proclamation of what was simmering beneath the surface elsewhere too in Athens. Yes?

Reader:
"and ties of blood exist only when they can be relied upon; one must choose one's friends and enemies according to the circumstances on each particular occasion. And here in Sicily what suits our interest is not to weaken our friends, but to use the strength they have to render our

[x] Strauss misspeaks: Italy is not at issue here.
[xi] In fact the argument is the opposite, that in Sicily it is the freedom of the Chalcidians that is useful to Athens. Strauss corrects himself immediately afterward.

enemies powerless. This is something which you must not doubt. In Hellas our leadership of our allies is adapted to make each ally most useful to us. The Chians and Methymnians provide ships and are independent: most of the others have rather harsher terms and pay regular contributions of money; while some allies, although they are islanders and easy for us to take over, enjoy complete freedom, because they are in convenient positions round the Peloponnese. It is reasonable to suppose, therefore, that here, too, in our Sicilian policy, we should be guided by our own interests and, as we say, by our fear of Syracuse." (6.85)

LS: Fear is again repeated. That means the last and strongest resort, the *ultima ratio* of Athens is fear. On the Prussian calendar—I do not know whether that was in other calendars—there was an inscription—*ultima ratio regis*, "the ultimate reason of the king." Now he says *ultima ratio tyranni metus est*, "the ultimate ratio, reason of the tyrant or the imperial power is fear." And we have learned from a later man—who presents a somewhat different picture and was in many ways very different—the same: *the* foundation of justice is fear. [LS raps on the table] Hobbes. And that Hobbes translated Thucydides—that was his first work which he did—is no accident. He was very much attracted by that. Only Hobbes saw that this would lead to justice, of course, that's also what Thucydides in his way says, but to a much greater justice than any other principle. The rationale being that the man who fears, fears for his life, and no one can be blamed if he acts in self-defense. And what is true of the individual is true also of states. And on this basis, this is your only basis on which you can have a nonbarbaric civil society and politics. That is a long question. But I think there is a close, a direct line from Thucydides to Hobbes and [this] can be even shown quite externally by the fact that Hobbes made that translation. Someone told me—I believe you did—that the translation is no longer available in bookstores, because it was brought out of course in the Molesworth edition of Hobbes's English works, but that cannot be paid by ordinary mortals. And then they brought it out, the Michigan University Press brought it out with Monsieur de Jouvenel's introduction and David Grene, I believe, correcting the English translation, I believe. But that seems to be out of print.[xii]

Student: University of Michigan Press?

LS: Ya. In Ann Arbor. Ya, ten years ago or so. Yes, now let us finish that.

Reader:
"The aim of the Syracusans is to rule over you, and their policy is to make you unite on the basis of your suspicions of us and then to take over the empire of Sicily themselves either by force or, when we have retired without achieving anything, because there will be no one to dispute it with them. This is bound to happen if you do unite with them, since so great a combined force would no longer be easy for us to deal with, and, once we had disappeared from the scene, they would be quite strong enough to take their measures against you. (6.85)

"Anyone who does not agree with this will find that the facts are against him. When you asked for our help originally, what you held in front of us was the fear that, if we allowed you to fall into the power of Syracuse, we ourselves would be in danger. It is hardly fair for you now to mistrust the very same argument which you thought was the one to convince us then, or to be

[xii] A version of Hobbes's translation, with Grene's corrections but without Jouvenel's introduction, was available at the time of this writing from the University of Chicago Press.

suspicious of us because we have come against Syracuse with a force rather larger than you expected. The people you ought to distrust are the Syracusans. We for our part cannot stay here without your support, and even if we were so base as to deprive you of your independence we could not keep you under our control because of the length of the voyage and the difficulty of garrisoning large cities armed on the lines of continental powers. The Syracusans, on the other hand, are your close neighbours; they are not living in a camp, but in a city bigger than the force we have with us; they are constantly intriguing against you, and whenever they get a chance of carrying out their plans they take it, as they have shown in the case of Leontini among others. And now they have the face to ask you for your help against the very people who have been preventing their designs and have up to now kept Sicily independent. They must have a poor idea of your intelligence! We on our side invite you to a much more real safety when we urge you not to betray the safety which we get from you and you get from us and to reflect that for Syracuse, even without allies, the way is always open because of their numbers to attack you, whereas you will not often get the chance of defending yourselves with such forces on your side as we are offering. And if, because of your suspicions, we have to return with nothing accomplished, or even defeated, the time will come when you will wish to see just a fraction of these forces, but the time will have passed when their presence will be able to do you any good." (6.86)

LS: Ya, I think we can stop here. But the conclusion is here: there is no doubt that Camarina cannot stand entirely by itself; but Athens, so far away, cannot constitute such a great danger to Camarina's freedom as Syracuse, which lies in close proximity, in fact does. And so now what is the final result? That we can read in chapter 88 and then we are through with that. Yes?

Reader: Chapter 88?

LS: Chapter 88. Ya.

Reader:
This was the speech of Euphemus. The state of feeling among the people of Camarina was as follows. They were well disposed to the Athenians, except in so far as they thought they might enslave Sicily, and they were always opposed to their neighbours the Syracusans. They feared Syracuse, however, just because of this proximity quite as much as they feared Athens, and it was through fear that the Syracusans might win even without them that they had sent them originally the small force of cavalry. So for the future they thought it best to give their practical support, though as little of it as possible, to Syracuse; but for the moment, in order to avoid giving the impression that they had treated Athens with disrespect (particularly as the Athenians had won the battle), they decided to give the same answer to each side. So, after their discussion had proceeded along these lines, they replied that since a state of war existed between two parties, both of which were their allies, they thought that the only way at present of keeping the oaths they had sworn was not to help either side. The representatives of Syracuse and Athens then went away. (6.88)

LS: So in other words, they tried to be cautious and avoid the danger, until the god of battles has decided for them and then they can take sides. Whether that succeeds or not remains to be seen. And now we come to another exchange of speeches, but this time in Sparta, and Alcibiades's action, and this is of course of the greatest interest. How can a man with that past, and with that

immediate past known to everybody, have the nerve to defend his action? That we must see. There is another question which I would like to take up, which came to my proper attention, or what I believe to be my proper attention only now, in the last week. And I think we should postpone the Spartan discussion and Alcibiades's vindication until next time. Now the question which I have in mind (I hope I can end this today) occurs in the fourth book and in chapter 114. That is the story of the march of Brasidas to Thrace. You remember, when he first conquered Amphipolis, and Thucydides was there in command of a small naval squadron and Thucydides came too late to save Amphipolis. But Brasidas's first action in the north was against the city of Acanthus, allies of the Athenians, whom he persuaded to change sides, and where he referred to the solemn oaths which the highest Spartan authorities had sworn that they would not misuse their power against Acanthus if they win the war. And Brasidas was a good speaker—for a Spartan, as Thucydides says—and convinced Acanthus, and Acanthus changed sides. And then he has similar successes in the north later on, and there is one especially interesting, and that is in chapter 114. Will you be so kind as to read that?

Reader:
It was now day, and Brasidas, having the city firmly in his hands, made a proclamation to the citizens of Torone—

LS: Torone.[xiii] Torone is the name of the city which he wishes to induce to abandon the Athenians and to join the Spartans. Yes?

Reader:
made a proclamation to the citizens of Torone who had taken refuge with the Athenians, inviting all who wished to do so to return to their own property and guaranteeing them their civil rights with no reprisals. He also sent a herald to the Athenians asking them to evacuate Lecythus, since it was Chalcidian territory, and saying that they could leave under an armistice, taking all their belongings with them. The Athenians refused to leave the place, but asked for a truce for one day in order to take up their dead. Brasidas gave a truce for two days and spent these days—

LS: You see, he is a nice man, not petty. Ya?

Reader:
gave a truce for two days and spent these days in fortifying the houses nearby, while the Athenians also strengthened their own position. (4.114)

LS: So in other words, it was not *pure* generosity. Yes?

Reader:
Meanwhile he called a meeting of the people of Torone and made much the same speech as he had made at Acanthus.

LS: Ya. "Similar," "rather similar speeches." Yes?

Reader:

[xiii] Strauss corrects the reader's pronunciation.

He said that it would not be fair to think the worse of those who had worked with him for the capture of the city, or to regard them as traitors; they had not aimed at enslaving the city, nor had they taken bribes for what they did, but had acted entirely for the good of Torone and for its freedom. Nor would it be right for those who had not taken a hand in the work to imagine that they would not share equally in its results; he had not come to do harm either to cities or to individuals. This, in fact, was why he had made the proclamation to those who had taken refuge with the Athenians; he thought no worse of them for being friendly with the Athenians; only when they got to know the Spartans, they would be just as friendly with them, indeed much more so, since Spartans acted more justly than Athenians; it was simply from lack of experience that they were now afraid of Sparta. He then urged them all to make up their minds to be loyal allies, and to recognize that from now on they would be held responsible for anything done amiss. As for the past, they could not be held to have done wrong to Sparta; it was rather they themselves who had been wronged by the superior power of others, and, if they had opposed him in any way, he was ready to overlook it. (4.114)

LS: Ya. That was the speech of Brasidas to the Toronians. Now you will remember the speech he gave to the Acanthians, to which we were explicitly referred. Now what are the differences between the two speeches?[xiv] The most obvious difference, I believe, is that this speech is not quoted but only reported, and the question arises: Why does Thucydides make that change? One could of course say: Well, after he had reported it, quoted it once, there was no use to do it twice. But still, for the same reason one could say there was also no need to report about it because he knew the main content. I mean, after all, he must have had some reason for [it]. It is not identical, the same speech; he says similar things. So what are the differences, and what accounts for them? That is a question. One could of course say: Well, the first speech had the purpose, among others, to show us Brasidas as a speaker, his rhetorical ability. Now that we have seen, we don't have to see it twice. That one could give . . . Whether that is sufficient is another matter.

Student: Is the assurance that . . .

LS: Ya, but he had said substantially the same to the Acanthians. But there are other points which one has to consider, I believe. What is surely lacking is any reference to the oaths by the Spartan authorities. And there is a remark in between, in chapter 118—I beg your pardon, in chapter 108, that the Spartan authorities were not too pleased with Brasidas. No, Brasidas was a somewhat irregular Spartan, and maybe they felt that by committing the Spartan authorities, he had acted *ultra vires*, and this could be one reason. There are other points, I believe, which one has to consider. In the speech in Torone, there is of course no reference whatever to the gods, whereas in the speech to the people in Acanthus, there are such references. But it is perhaps more important for clarifying the situation to consider two parallel cases which we came across but did not properly consider. The first is the speech of the Athenian ambassadors in Athens[xv] in book 1, chapters 72 to 78, in which the Athenian ambassadors defend Athens against the attacks by the Corinthians and the others, and this account, this quoted speech is in a quite rare way introduced by a Thucydidean report of that speech. That always worried me. Maybe he was—ordinarily either he reports or he quotes, but here is first a report and then a quotation, and the quotation is of course much longer, but it is not strikingly different in substance from what he said in his

[xiv] A long pause follows here.
[xv] Strauss misspeaks, substituting Athens for Sparta.

report. But if we take a somewhat broader view and see this speech of the Athenian in Sparta as one of the four speeches delivered on that occasion, we see that three of these four speeches, one of them being the Athenian speech, refer to the gods, the only exception being the speech of the Spartan King Archidamus, where there is no reference to the gods. And that is not a small difference, for Thucydides.

Now there is one more example, to the best of my knowledge, of such a seeming superfluity or irregularity, and that occurs in the second book, chapters 88 to 89. Let's have a look at that.

Reader:
In this way the Peloponnesian commanders encouraged their men. Phormio also was alarmed about the morale of his own men. He saw that they were forming into groups among themselves and were obviously frightened by the numbers on the other side. He therefore called them together with the object of putting fresh heart into them and giving them his advice in the present circumstances. He had often spoken to them before, and used to impress on their minds that there was no fleet, however great, that they could not face in battle, and for a long time his sailors had had the proud opinion of themselves that they, as Athenians, would never give way before any numbers of Peloponnesian ships. Now, however, he realized that the sight before their eyes was making them downhearted—

LS: Because for the first time they were confronted by a numerical superiority of Peloponnesian ships. Yes?

Reader:
and he thought it well to restore confidence. He therefore called the Athenians together and spoke as follows: (2.88)

"I see, my men, that you are alarmed by the enemy's numbers, and I have called this meeting because I do not want you to be frightened when there is no occasion to be so. First of all, the reason why they have equipped this great number of ships and are not meeting us on even terms is that they have been defeated once already and do not even think themselves that they are a match for us. The thing which gives them most confidence in facing us is that they imagine themselves to have a kind of monopoly in being brave, yet this comforting belief is based simply on their experience in land fighting, owing to which they have won many victories. They think that this experience of theirs will be equally valuable on the sea; but here, if there is anything in their argument, the advantage will be on our side. They are certainly no braver than we are, and as for feeling confident, both they and we have that feeling with regard to the element where we have the greater experience. Then, too, the Spartans who are in command of them are acting for the honour of Sparta, and most of their men are being led into danger much against their will; otherwise they could never have faced the prospect of another naval action after the great defeat they have suffered already. So there is no reason at all for you to fear that they will show any great audacity. It is much more the case that they are frightened of you, and with much better reason, partly because you have beaten them already and partly because they think that you would not be standing up to them now unless you were going to do something altogether worthy of the occasion. When one side is in superior numbers, as our enemy is, it makes its attack

relying more on force than on resolution. But if the other side, far weaker in material resources, takes up the challenge, when there is no compulsion to do so, it means that that side has something in mind to fall back upon which is very great indeed. This is what our enemies are reckoning on, and they are more frightened by the unexpectedness of our action than they would be if we were meeting them on reasonably equal terms. Great forces before now have been defeated by small ones because of lack of skill and sometimes because of lack of daring. We are deficient in neither of these qualities.

"Now as for the battle, if I can help it, I shall not fight it in the gulf, nor shall I sail into the gulf. I fully realize that lack of sea room is a disadvantage for a small, experienced, and fast squadron fighting with a lot of badly managed ships. One cannot sail up in the proper way to make an attack by ramming, unless one has a good long view of the enemy ahead, nor can one back away at the right moment if one is hard pressed oneself; it is impossible also to sail through the enemy's line and then wheel back on him—which are the right tactics for the fleet which has the superior seamanship. Instead of all this, one would be compelled to fight a naval action as though it were a battle on land, and under those circumstances the side with the greater number of ships has the advantage. So you can be sure that I shall be watching out for all this as far as I can. As for you, you must stick to your posts in your ships, keep good order, and be on the alert for any word of command. This is especially important as they are at anchor so close to us. And when it comes to action, put your trust in discipline and in silence; in every kind of warfare they count a lot, and particularly in a naval engagement. Meet the enemy, therefore, in a manner worthy of your record in the past. There is a lot at stake for you in this struggle—either to destroy the naval hopes of the Peloponnesians or to bring nearer home to the Athenians their fears for the sea. Let me remind you once more that you have defeated most of this fleet already, and beaten men never have quite the same resolution as they had before when they come up against the same danger for the second time." (2.89)

LS: Ya. Now this speech of Phormio, a respectable naval commander, was preceded by a speech of the Peloponnesian naval commanders, and the most striking difference between the two speeches is this: that the Peloponnesian commander had said of course this, too, "Be brave men," but he added that terrible punishments will be inflicted on cowards. The Athenian commander only says, "the fate of Athens is at stake," nothing of punishment. The Spartan commander speaks of punishment. That is the decisive difference. And I believe that this difference between, on the Spartan side, threat of punishment, and the Athenian side, no threat of punishment, corresponds to the presence or absence of gods in the other case which we have discussed, so that we can understand this seeming repetition. But we must see whether we do not come across other cases, and whether it's—I beg your pardon?

Mrs. Kaplan: This is punishment by . . . but not by gods what . . .

LS: Ya, sure. Sure, but still it is punishment.

Mrs. Kaplan: This is a human . . .

LS: Sure, but it is punishment.

Mrs. Kaplan: Yeah . . .

Student: Could I ask you to say that again? Do you mean that because of the emphasis on the gods in Athens there is no need to say you will be punished, whereas in Sparta—

LS: No, no. I mean that it is so—in Sparta, old-fashioned Sparta, the punishment, human or divine, play[s] a much greater role than in Athens. Well, the thesis itself can easily be proved, if proof were needed, by the funeral speech, where Pericles said, "We are easy-going people," you know, and "we don't trust coercion but our natural courage, our natural initiative." You remember that? That is clear. But there is also a connection between human punishment and divine punishment, and not only because they are both punishments but because of their *archaic* character. The speech of Diodotus in book 3, when he says at the beginning there was no punishment, and then men introduced it, especially capital punishment, and in Greece it's used ever more. That is a paradox, that is not what people remembered. They remembered that in the remote past punishment was much more in the foreground and severe than it is now.

Be this as it may, these questions of what Thucydides, what is going on in his mind when he makes these things, for example, when he, as he does very clearly in book 1 in that case which we discussed briefly, reports a speech and then quotes it. Why does he—I mean, if he would do it in all cases, it would be no problem, but if he does it rarely, and as far as I can see in this book only once, it forces one to raise the question: Why does he do it here and now?

Mrs. Kaplan: Should you, I mean, should we emphasize more the importance of speeches more like this example. We have clearly a situation before the battle. He describes, he himself, Thucydides . . . saw that we are in a disadvantaged position. And now follows a speech. What is this speech about? It looks like the situation is clearly described, and that the speech is kind of addition of Thucydides to make it more vivid, to make it, to present to us the same situation, not . . . but kind of same situation, that's all.

LS: Ya, but the speaker is not Thucydides.

Mrs. Kaplan: My question is clearly that: should we take these speeches as speeches, or should we take them as presentation of the same situation, but with desire to make it—understand it, that what he presents in speech is kind of more . . . more vivid, more strong.

LS: Ya, but in some cases the speeches contradict one another, and one speaker is shown to be quite wrong.

Mrs. Kaplan: He could contradict very well . . . He very well makes speeches in contradiction. Couldn't the speech of the Spartan general . . . and so this punishment he very well put in the speeches. . . It is very hard for me to take these whole speeches in quotation marks . . . But quotations marks make me kind of uneasy, and this is naïve from my side, but—

LS: No, it is—

Mrs. Kaplan: . . . two thousand years . . .

LS: No, I think it is strange for all of us, really, it is strange for a historian to insert speeches which he has composed and using the same rhetorical devices in all cases, regardless who the speaker is. That is surely—but that makes it all more necessary, I believe, to reflect as to why Thucydides did do this, and what he says himself about it is extremely brief and it appears only in chapter 22 of the first book, and the only thing which appears is that what seemed to him, to Thucydides, enters into the speeches, but not into the narrative of actions. In the narrative of action he lays down what he has found out as actually having been done, but in the case of speeches, what *seemed* to *him* the right thing to say for this man in these circumstances enters. That's the only clear utterance we have.

Mrs. Kaplan: Well, his intellectual force of his own mind which sees so clearly the situation . . . And so this is an intellectual power of Thucydides, deep, deep one which allows him to do this.

LS: Ya, but still—

Mrs. Kaplan: . . . could not listen to these speeches, he could not listen . . .

LS: Ya, but that could have been achieved by reported speeches as well.

Student: . . . as reported, namely . . . his power of knowing, considers what is probable. In other words, he takes the gist of the thing and quotes it. As one would say, that is what is probable—

LS: Ya, all right.

Student: . . .

Session 14: no date
Book 6, chapters 88-end

Leo Strauss: The Athenians landed in Sicily, but their hope for Sicilian succours was disappointed. Above all, Alcibiades was recalled. Nevertheless, Nicias defeats the Syracusans but does not exploit the victory: [he] has no cavalry. This is a theme which goes through the whole thing. Then there takes place an exchange of speeches in Camarina between Hermocrates and Euphemus, which we have read or discussed last time. Athens and Syracuse meet for the first time, if only in speeches. The Camarinaeans decide not to join either of the two warring parties. During the winter, the Syracusans send embassies to Carthage, Corinth, Sparta and elsewhere in order to form alliances with these cities. The most important of course is that in Sparta, and there we should begin. This is chapter 88, section 9.

Reader:
The Corinthians immediately voted in favour of giving them ungrudgingly all the help they could themselves, and at the same time sent representatives to accompany them to Sparta and to join them in trying to persuade the Spartans to do their part by making war more openly on Athens in Hellas and by sending a force to Sicily.

Alcibiades and those who were exiled with him were also in Sparta when the representatives arrived from Corinth. He had crossed immediately from Thurii in a merchant ship and gone first to Cyllene in Elis and then, on the invitation of the Spartans themselves, to Sparta. He had secured a guarantee for his safety, since he had reason to fear the Spartans because of his share in the events at Mantinea. (6.88)

LS: Mantinea—you know, the Spartans had a war, a brief war with Mantinea where they won the battle—you remember that?—when they had to change their whole traditional tactics yet won through their bravery, not through their their *nomos* [νόμος], through their traditional tactics. Yes?

Reader:
So now it happened that in the Spartan assembly the Corinthians, the Syracusans, and Alcibiades were all making the same requests and urging the same arguments. The ephors and other magistrates, though they were prepared to send representatives to Syracuse to prevent the Syracusans coming to terms with Athens, were not very willing to send any military assistance. Alcibiades then came forward, roused up Spartan opinion, and incited them to action by the following speech— (6.88)

LS: Ya, "by saying about the following." Now it's a very interesting situation. Alcibiades [is] in Sparta and must of course justify his own position that he betrays his fatherland, and how will he get out of—and Sparta was supposed to be particularly patriotic—how is he going to get out of that fix? That we will see in the next chapter, this speech of Alcibiades. Yes?

Reader:

"The first thing I must do is to deal with the prejudice which you feel against me, so that you may listen to matters of common interest without being biased by any suspicion of me personally."

LS: How does he say "suspicion"?

Reader: "Prejudice."

LS: "Prejudice." Ya, that is like the Russian term "slander," you know? It means really "to slander," the word which he uses, *diabolē* [διαβολή], just as the Russians call every criticism of Russia "slander," as you probably know. How did you know? [Laughter] Yes? Go on.

Reader:
"My ancestors used to hold the position of official representatives for Sparta in Athens—"

LS: Ya, "official representatives," in other words, something like consuls. But in the ancient times there were no consuls, there was a man called *proxenos* [πρόξενος], a man who was in charge of the foreigners from a given city, and he represented them in case they had any difficulties with the local authorities. And this was a heritage in Alcibiades's family, so that Alcibiades has a pro-Spartan past, at least in his ancestry. That's number one. Yes?

Reader:
"because of some misunderstanding they gave up this position, but I myself took it up again and put my services at your disposal, particularly with regard to the losses which you sustained at Pylos. I remained anxious to help you throughout, but when you made peace with Athens you negotiated through my personal enemies, thus putting them in a stronger position and discrediting me." (6.89)

LS: You see: was he not perfectly entitled by this fact to side with the anti-Spartans when the Spartans sided, used the help of Alcibiades's domestic enemies? He's very sure of himself, that he regards this as a good argument. But he must be such an imposing man that he could afford using this argument. Ya?

Student: In his appearance?

LS: In his presence, as they say. I mean, that was more difficult than Watergate,[i] I believe. [Laughter]

Student: I think if we were in contemporary Russia, they would say that his answers . . .

LS: That answers?

Student: Yeah, that his answers . . . well, the Athenians were also traitors, which is proven by the fact that he betrays them.

[i] Strauss refers to a scandal then very much in the news, which would result in the forced resignation of President Richard M. Nixon.

LS: In a way, he will say that later. In a way, ya. He doesn't quite go so far.

Mr. Berns: It would seem that he's almost putting himself on the level of the *polis*.

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Berns: I said he almost puts himself on the level of the *polis*.

LS: Ya. Ya, sure. No, more than that. He and his interest is the guiding consideration. To that extent, he takes the place of the *polis*. Ya.

Student: Mr. Berns, I think Thucydides does that too, when he says the Corinthians, the Syracusans, and Alcibiades made the same request. That they group . . .

LS: Where is that?

Student: In the previous paragraph.

LS: Paragraph 9, ya? Ya, that's true. Ya, he is an independent power by himself. Yes?

Reader:
"You have therefore no right to blame me for the injuries you suffered when I turned to Mantinea and to Argos and opposed you in various other ways. And if in those days when you were actually suffering any of you were unreasonably angry with me, the time has now come for you to look at the matter in its true light and to change your views. Or if anyone thought the worse of me because I was rather on the side of the people, here again he should see that this was no good reason for being against me. My family has always been opposed to dictators—" (6.89)

LS: "To tyrants," ya.

Reader:
"democracy is the name given to any force that opposes absolute power; and so we have continued to act as the leaders of the common people. Besides, since democracy was the form of government in Athens, it was necessary in most respects to conform to the conditions that prevailed."

LS: So in other words, you can't use this as an argument against me, that I am a democrat, because what could I do in the circumstances? And to say nothing of the fact that the alternative to democracy is tyranny, and you Spartans were always proud of putting down tyrannies, so [have] a very clean record. Yes?

Reader:
"However in the face of the prevailing political indiscipline, we tried to be more reasonable. There have been people in the past, just as there are now, who used to try to lead the masses into

evil ways. It is people of this sort who have banished me. But we were leaders of the city[ii] as a whole, and our principles were that we should all join together in preserving the form of government which had been handed down to us under which the city was most great and most free. As for democracy, those of us with any sense at all knew what that meant, and I just as much as any. Indeed, I am well equipped to make an attack on it; but nothing new can be said of a system which is generally recognized as absurd. As for changing the system, that appeared to us as unsafe while you were engaged in war with us." (6.89)

LS: Ya. So in other words, democracy is of course just admittedly nonsense, that we all know and no one better than I. And therefore there is no—his democratic past can only be hypocritical and not serious. Yes. And now let us read the next chapter.

Reader:
"So much for the things which have created prejudice against me. I now—"

LS: It's always the same word, *diabolē* [διαβολή]. Ya?

Reader:
"I now want you to listen to what I have to say on the subject which you are to discuss—a subject on which I am perhaps peculiarly well qualified to speak. We sailed to Sicily to conquer first, if possible, the Sicilians, and after them the Hellenes in Italy; next we intended to attack the Carthaginian empire and Carthage herself. Finally, if all or most of these plans were successful, we were going to make our assault on the Peloponnese, bringing with us all the additional Hellenic forces which we should have acquired in the west and hiring as mercenaries great numbers of native troops—Iberians and others who are now recognized as being the best fighting material to be found in those parts. In addition to our existing fleet we should have built many more triremes, since Italy is rich in timber, and with all of them we should have blockaded the coast of the Peloponnese, while at the same time our army would be operating on land against your cities, taking some by assault and others by siege. In this way we hoped that the war would easily be brought to a successful conclusion and after that we should be the masters of the entire Hellenic world. As for money and provisions, there could be no fear of them running short, since sufficient supplies were to be provided by our new conquests in the west without touching our revenues here in Hellas." (6.90)

LS: So in other words, apart from the fact that my past is unimpeachable from the intelligent Spartan point of view, Athens is your enemy, and the ambitions of Athens are limitless, as he asserts here. And this goes beyond all other statements about the limits, or non-limits, of Athenian ambition, but God knows what would have happened.

Student: Are we to take this as confirmation from . . . own mouth of Thucydides's hypothesis in the beginning, that the reason the war began was because of the Spartans' fear of the Athenians?

LS: Not necessarily, because if the Athenians would have encircled the Peloponnesus, you know, this would have been sufficiently dangerous for Sparta even without the conquests in the west. But of course in this connection it can only have an aggravating effect, naturally, in Sparta

[ii] Warner has "State."

and, as he says, he knows better than anyone else. Then he gives his advice, what they should do in the circumstances. Yes?

Reader:
"You have now heard from the man who knows most about it what were in fact the objects of the present expedition—"

LS: Ya, that is interesting. I mean, he could have no better source of information. Now he doesn't say: From him who knows best about what *we* intended [LS raps on the table for emphasis], we Athenians. An amazing sentence, what was going on in our minds. At the beginning of chapter 91.

Reader:
"and the generals who are left will, if they can, continue just the same to carry out these plans. What you must now realize is that, unless you help her, Sicily will be lost. The Sicilians lack the experience which Athens has, but might even now survive if they all united together. The Syracusans by themselves, however, whose total force has already been defeated in one battle and who are at the same time blockaded by sea, will not be able to hold out against the Athenian forces now in Sicily. And if Syracuse falls, all Sicily falls with it, and Italy soon afterward. It would not then be long before you were confronted with the dangers which I have just told you threatened you from the west." (6.91)

LS: Italy means here naturally only the southern part of Italy, the only part of interest to the Greeks, which was called Major Greece.[iii] Ya? I mean the southern part, the toe—the whole of the foot of Italy, I mean, not the northern part. Yes?

Reader:
"So do not imagine that it is only the question of Sicily that is under discussion; it will be the question of the Peloponnese unless you quickly take the following measures: you must send out to Sicily a force of troops that are able to row the ships themselves and to take the field as hoplites as soon as they land; and—what I consider even more useful than the troops—you must send out as commander a regular Spartan officer to organize the troops that are there already—"

LS: "A Spartiate," a man of the Spartan nobility. Ya? Yes?

Reader:
"and to force into the service those who are shirking their duty. This is the way to put fresh heart into your friends and make the waverers less frightened of joining in. Then, too, the war in Hellas must be carried on more openly. This will have the effect of stiffening Syracusan resistance, when they see that you are taking an interest in them, and will make it harder for the Athenians to reinforce their army in Sicily. And you must fortify Decelea—" (6.91)

LS: "Decelea," ya.

[iii] Evidently Strauss's improvised English rendering of the Latin *Magna Graecia (*Great or Greater Greece, denoting the area of Greek colonization in Southern Italy*),* a term usually left in the Latin.

Reader:
"Decelea in Attica; it is the thing of which the Athenians have always been most frightened, and they think that of all the adversities of the war this is the only one that they have not experienced. The surest way of harming an enemy is to find out certainly what form of attack he is most frightened of and then to employ it against him. He is likely to know himself more accurately than anyone else where his danger lies, and that is why he is frightened. As for what you will gain and what you will force Athens to lose if you fortify Decelea, I shall merely summarize the most important points, omitting many others. Most of the property in the area will come into your hands, some by capture, some without your having to move a finger. Athens will immediately be deprived of her revenues from the silver mines at Laurium and from what she gets at present from the land and from the law-courts. Most important of all, she will lose her tribute from the allies, since they will pay it in much less regularly and will cease to be overawed by Athens herself once they see that you are now really making war seriously. How quickly and how energetically these things are done depends on you, Spartans; I am perfectly confident that they can be done, and I do not think that I am likely to be wrong.

"I claim also that none of you should think the worse of me if, in spite of my previous reputation for loving my country, I now join in vigorously with her bitterest enemies in attacking her—" (6.91-92)

LS: So he returns, at the end he returns to his own case and justifies himself, that he was supposed to be the most patriotic Athenian and now he seems to be the worst traitor of his fatherland. Now he has a good answer, from his point of view. Yes?

Reader:
"Nor should you suspect my argument on the grounds that it derives simply from the strong feelings of an exile." (6.92)

LS: The strong feeling of an exile who wants to return home and to take revenge on his enemies. There's a beautiful chapter on this subject in Machiavelli's *Discourses*, I believe in 2.30,[iv] that exiles are very unreliable reporters about the country from which they were expelled because their longing for their homeland deceives them. But in Machiavelli that is a bit double-buttoned because he thinks not only of what everyone would think, he thinks also of the heavenly fatherland, of the people who are concerned with the heavenly fatherland and would like to come to it, are not good advisers as to how to keep one's earthly fatherland. And then he gives an Italian example of such a man, who—I forgot the name—who ended very badly. Albizzi, I believe was his name.[v] Yes?

Reader:
"I am an exile because of the villainy of the men who banished me,[vi] not out of any wish, if you listen to me, to help you. And the worst enemies of Athens are not those who, like you, have only harmed her in war, but those who have forced her friends to turn against her. The Athens I

[iviv] Machivelli, *Discourses* 2.31.
[v] Rinaldo degli Albizzi (1370-1442), Florentine nobleman and unsuccessful rival of Cosimo de'Medici for the rule of Florence. Machiavelli discusses him in chapter 4 of his *Florentine Histories.*
[vi] Warner has "who drove me out."

love is not the one which is wronging me now, but that one in which I used to have secure enjoyment of my rights as a citizen. The country that I am attacking does not seem to me to be mine any longer—"

LS: The word used for "country" is of course "fatherland." That gives it a particular force. Yes?

Reader:
"The fatherland that I am attacking does not seem to me to be mine any longer; it is rather that I am trying to recover a fatherland that has ceased to be mine. And the man who really loves his fatherland is not the one who refuses to attack it when he has been unjustly driven from it, but the man whose desire for it is so strong that he will shrink from nothing in his efforts to get back there again. And so, Spartans, I think that you should not hesitate to make use of my services in every kind of danger or hardship. You should remember the argument that everyone uses and realize that just as I did you much harm when I was your enemy, so I can be of considerable service to you as a friend: of Athens I have certain knowledge, whereas with regard to Sparta I had to proceed by guesswork. My advice to you is to recognize that it is your basic interests which are now being discussed: you must not shrink from undertaking the campaigns in Sicily and in Attica; the presence of only a fraction of your forces in Sicily will ensure great results, and you will destroy both the present power and the future prospects of Athens. After that you yourselves will live in safety and be the leaders of the whole of Hellas, which will follow you voluntarily, not because of force, but from goodwill."[vii] (6.92)

LS: Ya. So what can you say to that? It surely can't have displeased the Spartans unless they would have been preternaturally moral—which we know already before that they're not, that they would abandon a great likely advantage just because some indecency was involved. And these two measures—that the Spartans and the other Peloponnesians should help the Sicilians under a Spartan commander and that the Spartans should occupy Decelea, about twenty kilometers from Athens in Attica, and occupy throughout the year and inflict severe damage on Athenian agriculture and so on, much more severe than they would have before—these were very important actions to bring Athens down, as we will see from the sequel.

Student: What do you think Alcibiades's intention was in going to Sparta and—?

LS: What should he do? If he had returned to Athens, he would surely have been strangled. I mean legally, of course. And—

Same Student: I mean, in siding with the Spartans, I mean, he's clearly being used by the Spartans. I don't think he could really have ascendancy over Sparta, and yet how would he be regarded by the Athenians if he is successful? Would he be able to—?

LS: Ya, then we have to follow the whole history of Alcibiades later on. His advice was militarily excellent, and the Peloponnesians won the Sicilian war. And later on he got into troubles with the Spartans, but this didn't ruin him because he had more arrows to his bow than Sparta and he established connections with the Persian king and gave the Persian king excellent

[vii] Where the reader has "fatherland," Warner has it is "country."

advice [about] what *he* should do, that he should help the Athenians against the Spartans and the Spartans against the Athenians, and so the Persian king would control the situation.

Same Student: Well, I kind of speculated on what he intended, because first it's hard to speculate, because he failed in a sense with what wanted, so we can't know from his actions what it was he intended. I have to sort of guess what he wanted to achieve.

LS: He was called back by the Athenians later on, after the revolution in Athens. But then he got into troubles because he [1]didn't seem reliable enough to the true democrats. So he was again banished but had the moral and financial support of the Persian king and lived somewhere in the north, in what is now Thrace. Then the war went on—I mean, after the Sicilian disaster the war went on and the Athenians had a strong navy in the north, and Alcibiades from his castle or what it was observed the operations of the Athenian navy and told the commanders that they are making a big mistake and that they should do this and this in order to defeat the Spartans. And then these fools said: You have nothing to say no more. And they followed their own strategy, were defeated by the Spartans, and that was practically the end of Athens. So the whole ends with a moral victory of Alcibiades. If they had listened to him and they had won that battle, Athens would not have been starved and forced into surrender. I mean, it is a very ambiguous story and it doesn't have simply a happy ending, but you cannot also say it has a simply edifying ending, because the traitor was punished. In a way, these people, these correct admirals who refused to listen to him, did more harm to Athens than Alcibiades did. The story is not completely told by by Thucydides; the sequel is to be found in the first and second book of Xenophon's Greek history.[viii] But if you put these two things together, you get this picture.

Same Student: Well, does that—I'm wondering about the mixture of Alcibiades's love for Athens and love for power. You know, whether—which in his mind was uppermost?

LS: Alcibiades?

Student: Yeah, in Alcibiades.

LS: . . . And the strange thing is that this has something to do with the peculiar friendship between him and Socrates, because for Socrates too there is something higher than the *polis*, namely, the highest individual, only there is a difference between Socrates and Alcibiades as to what constitutes that, that which is higher than the *polis*. But I would say that the mere fact, the mere way in which Alcibiades is treated in Plato, especially in the *Banquet*, shows that he was one of the most gifted of the political Athenians. And that is confirmed, as I know only since a relatively short time, by Xenophon's report, because one of the points of accusation against Socrates was that the two most lost or corrupt Athenians, Critias and Alcibiades, are pupils of Socrates. And that is said, and there is something to that. But in the defense which Xenophon makes, when you read it carefully, you see that Xenophon makes in the decisive points clear distinctions between Critias and Alcibiades. Critias was really a vicious, cruel fellow, although not as beastly as some others of the so-called Thirty Tyrants. But in the case of Alcibiades, the

[viii] Xenophon *Hellenica* 2.1.15-32.

sin of Alcibiades in Xenophon is his conversation with Pericles, his tutor,[ix] about what is law. And Alcibiades was at that time twenty years old, and he refutes [Pericles][x] just as Socrates would have refuted him, with a famous Socratic procedure. You know? Pericles gives a definition of law, of which Alcibiades shows that it is at best valid only of a law enacted under a democracy, and then [Alcibiades][xi] shows him that this would not be applicable to law in general. And then Pericles has finally no way out but to say: Oh, yes, when we were young, we also enjoyed this kind of discussions, and it might have been quite interesting to have met you then. But he's not interested in it. But Alcibiades has a certain interest in this.[xii] No, Alcibiades was an outstanding man, a terribly dangerous man, surely, but an outstanding man. Mr. Berns?

Mr. Berns: One wonders how considerations like, let's say, that some members of his family might be killed because of what he did, things like that. I just wondered what sort of weight they had? It seemed that they had no weight for him.

LS: His family?

Mr. Berns: Yeah, I mean, I think the sort of thing that one would no longer think now, some of his own friends, some of his own family could perhaps be killed because of the advice that he gives.

LS: Ya, well, politics is a dangerous thing anyway. You know? But I don't recall a clear case of disgraceful betrayal of his relatives and friends.

Mr. Berns: But would this in effect, would this in effect be doing something like that . . . relatives and friends . . .

LS: In the Sicilian expedition?

Mr. Berns: There, also in Athens itself . . .

LS: Ya. But no, he regarded himself as at war with Athens at this point. But as for the Sicilian expedition, there is Plato's dialogue *Theages*, generally regarded as spurious today, in which Socrates speaks of his *daimonion* [δαιμόνιον] and how he had divined of some individuals, good friends, that they would perish in Sicily, and they did perish there.[xiii] Now, and one could say the ultimate responsibility is still that of Alcibiades, but Alcibiades would have said that a war is always dangerous, and secondly, the war would not have been as dangerous and it would not have been lost if the Athenians had not been so foolish as to believe these calumniators, slanderers. Mr. Berns, do you believe for one moment that I would like to set up Alcibiades as a model for you to follow? [Laughter]

[ix] Alcibiades, who was an orphan, was the ward of his kinsman Pericles, whom we would therefore ordinarily describe not as his tutor but as his guardian.
[x] Strauss says "Alcibiades," evidently in error.
[xi] Strauss says "Socrates," evidently in error.
[xii] Xenophon *Memorabilia* 1.2.40-46.
[xiii] Plato *Theages* 129d.

Mr. Berns: No, no, what I would [laughs]—perish the thought! But what I am wondering about is whether there was some sort of a general freedom from the kind of patriotism that I think rules most of us. That's what I'm curious about.

LS: Well, but people of whom we hear most, they are not average citizens. But I mean, among the many who were fully patriotic and much talked about, of course Pericles is the most outstanding, and therefore he plays a central role in Thucydides. But Pericles was an extremely clever man who succeeded perfectly in reconciling his self-interest in being the first citizen, the first man in Athens, with the public interest: making Athens great. But other people, and the greatest example is perhaps Nicias, achieve the same harmony on a lower level, and Demosthenes and so many others. No, I think these were exceptions, but of course the whole thing began, if we limit ourselves entirely to Thucydides, at the very beginning, and it is Themistocles, who started the Athenian imperial power by deceiving Athens' allies . . . and the tricks which he haven't read, by which he deceives the Spartans, do you remember . . . when he sends this, had arranged this embassy.[xiv] Ya, that is—well, I think Alcibiades is an extreme case. As extreme on the one hand as Themistocles on the other.

Mr. Berns: Yeah. You don't think that there was a kind of a different attitude among the Greeks as a whole than, say, prevails now about duties to one's fatherland?

LS: Ya. Well, there was a certain difficulty caused by the fact that the focus of loyalty was the *polis* and not Greece. But this kind of thing happens of course in other countries: think of Italy and Germany in the nineteenth century. You know? That's hard to say. But no, I think to be a *philopolis* [φιλόπολις], "a lover of one's city," was a high praise, and in this respect there was not.

Mr. Berns: You had said, and I think it is striking, you had said last time or the time before that you can't think of any modern parallel to Alcibiades.

LS: Ya, but on the other hand, what about Napoleon? What kind of a patriot was Napoleon? In a way, he was a Corsican patriot. He was brought up as such by his mother.

Mrs. Kaplan: . . .

LS: Pardon?

Mrs. Kaplan: Napoleon was more . . . statesman.

LS: Ya, but he was—

Mrs. Kaplan: . . . it is difficult to say, but part of it was, it was in France itself that took with and understood somehow more the situation of European . . . than Alcibiades. Alcibiades is kind of, in that way . . .

[xiv] Thucydides 1.89-93.

LS: Ya. No, one could perhaps say—that was Hegel's argument—that in Napoleon, his own ambition was linked up, inseparably linked up with the ideas of the French Revolution and he brought these to Europe and therefore had a public function.[xv]

Student: But Napoleon let himself be crowned emperor.

LS: Ya, that was the only way in which he could have a government after the excesses of Robespierre and his friends. You know? There had to be government, and Napoleon was the government, that meant a power independent of the people. That he had learned, he didn't know in advance, and that he established. Otherwise there would not be any stability. And only on the basis of this stability could he elaborate and have accepted the C*ode Civil*, you know, the French code which established the Rights of Man in concrete form.

But there is another man of whom one cannot help thinking when speaking about this question, and that is Bismarck. Bismarck was of course always a Prussian patriot, there's no doubt about that—Prussian, not necessarily German, that came in later, on the basis of calculation. And yet there is immorality of Bismarck in political matters: the deceptions which he practiced, and not only in foreign affairs, and the way in which he feathered at the same time his own selfish nest. You know? He became a very, very rich man through the donations which were heaped upon him. There is a beautiful statement about the subject by a German novelist called Fontane. I know it only because it has been reprinted by a German historian called Eyck,[xvi] *Bismarck*, three volumes.[xvii] And there is a longish letter of Fontane, a contemporary of Bismarck, who had observed him in his greatness and in his scandalous misbehavior, and one can only say: Well, that's also not a model which I would advise anyone to [LS chuckles]—and Bismarck could play morality itself in, as you know, in a fantastic manner.

Mr. Berns: Were you suggesting by bringing up Napoleon that he would be, he was perfectly willing to risk France's falling for his own ambition?

LS: Ya. No, well, he did it! When this thing in Egypt failed.[xviii] You know? I mean, then Trafalgar, before Trafalgar, and there he was, and there he had a relatively small French army, but there were lots of Arabs also. Well, and he was considering building up an empire, a Muslim empire, and he is said to have written in one of his statements to the sheiks of Egypt and other places "Our Prophet," meaning by him, without any question, Napoleon. And when he came back after, to France—

Mr. Berns: "Our," meaning—

[xv] Strauss seems here to rely on Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History,* in particular the chapter "Enlightement and Revolution."

[xvi] Strauss spells Eyck's name.

[xvii] Erich Eyck, *Bismarck* (3 vols.) (Erlenbach-Zurich, 1941-44). See also Erich Eyck, *Bismarck and the German Empire* (Allen & Unwin, 1950). Theodor Fontane (1819-1898), the most important German realist novelist, wrote a letter of March 12, 1881 in which he proclaims Bismarck a despot but defends the necessity of his despotism.

[xviii] Strauss refers to Bonaparte's unsuccessful Egyptian expedition of 1798-1801.

LS: Mohammed!

Mr. Berns: Yes, meaning Mohammed.

LS: And when he came back to France, this couldn't of course be done, and so he made a deal with the pope. [Laughter] And you should read what Ranke says on this subject in his "Roman Popes," which is very funny because Ranke was of course justly indignant about this amazing liberalism of Napoleon, but on the other hand he had the certain very subdued sense of humor to see what kind of a man that was.[xix] [LS chuckles]

Student: . . . . superman.

LS: In a way, ya.

Student: . . . there is. And I think that he can save France, and everything what he does, nobody can do it better than him. Nobody can do better than Alcibiades. This is his conviction. And on the other hand, he's a man, he's driven to take great risks to, how do you say, to go the tightrope for the purpose, either France or whatever it is. And the conviction that nobody can do it better, and there is something to it.

LS: Ya, but on the other hand, one could also make a strong case against Napoleon—[xx] without them, this kind of men, there wouldn't be world history, that's clear. And with them, there is no happiness.

Student: I think I had a kind of answer to Mr. Kaplan, what he said made me think of de Gaulle, who was also a man of grandeur, and also a man who was capable of all kinds of things.

LS: Ya, without any doubt. Including illegal murder—if murder, if a legal murder is imaginable. Ya?

Same Student: You are thinking of this Algerian?

LS: Ya.[xxi]

Same Student: Yeah, but it does seem to me that he is somehow. . . but it does seem to be that he was a man for whom France was really . . .

LS: Oh, yes. I think it's true. That's the reason why Churchill called him Jeanne D'Arc. No, no, that I think is true. He is subordinate. Madame France, he subordinates himself to—yes, that is true. But on the other hand, his task was much smaller: simply to restore French self-confidence

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[xix] Leopold von Ranke, *History of the Popes*, trans. E. Fowler (3 vols.) (NY: P. F. Collier & Son, 1901). Originally published 1834-36.

[xx] There is a break in the tape at this point.

[xxi] Strauss's reference is obscure: he might have in mind the police murder of several dozen Algerian demonstrators in Paris on the night of October 17, 1961, which was not carried out on de Gaulle's orders but which his regime covered up.

after the shattering defeat of 1940. I mean, he couldn't make, keep France a first-rate power. Ya? For historic reasons. Ya.

Mrs. Kaplan: I wonder, when we speak about modern history, we know certainly Napoleon and de Gaulle . . . Bismarck, all examples show that we hardly speak of whether they were cruel or real heroes. They identified themselves when they were statesmen with the country.

LS: Ya.

Mrs. Kaplan: There was a conscious nation as we understood this. Now I wanted to ask myself, what was behind Athenian or Spartans, how big—you see, Thucydides at the beginning very well characterized the Spartans and the Athenians, very well, and you see kind of different people. But how did they themselves attach to these little, little countries, "fatherland" as you called it? What was the regime which made them keep together, why Athenians were fellows? Besides that they were—how to say?—more enterprising, more brave? What kept them to Athens? Regime? That what Alcibiades—Plato was there, and Socrates was there. What . . .

LS: The graves of the forefathers.

Mrs. Kaplan: Ah! Just—

LS: And the gods belonging to them?

Mrs. Kaplan: But the gods were the same!

LS: Not quite. The rites differed. The rites differed, you know? Temples were different. But especially, but what surely were different were the graves.

Mrs. Kaplan: The graves. Don't forget the drama, the singing. They are almost the same. This is too narrow. So it is very narrow—

LS: Ya, that is not such a little thing, descent and everything going with that. But that, and surely this was somehow connected in a way which is not easy to clarify with regime, so that an Athenian always thought not only of the graves of the forefathers, but also of the establishment of Athenian democracy by Aristogeiton and Harmodius, although this story, as it was accepted by the Athenian populace, was largely fictitious, as Thucydides shows.

Student: Yet Themistocles was able to say that Athens was transformed from Hellas to Italy when he proposed taking the Athenian population—[xxii]

LS: Ya, but he was also, you must admit, a very marginal Athenian, as is shown by his letter to the Persian king. You know? I mean, for Themistocles the graves of ancestors didn't mean the same—

Same Student: And for Alcibiades as well.

[xxii] It is unclear to what episode of Themistocles's life the student means to refer.

LS: Ya. No, not for them. Ya, but they are not—we were speaking now of the more normal representatives of patriotism, and not of the men who are most outstanding in history.

Mrs. Kaplan: But certainly not philosophy was the main point of attachment for Athenians—

LS: No, no, philosophy, of course, philosophy made things worse, in a way. That's what you meant, philosophy made things worse. Sure. But when Socrates says, "It doesn't make any difference whether you bury me or burn me or where you bury me," what's the relevance of his grave? And his farewell to his nearest and dearest is not the most edifying thing I have ever read on this subject, and you probably, too. As when he says to Crito, "Someone throw her out, because she disturbs the discussion," and he wants to have a pleasant ending.[xxiii] Ya, and that is clear, this Hegelian construction is very beautiful, I think, how he shows how the *polis* is undermined first by the Macedonian empires, and then above all by Rome, and then nothing remained: a very strong but wholly empty state. And what formerly went into patriotism and other feelings could not find a place on earth anymore: hence Christianity. Ya. And then the later task was to bring down that "beyond" into the "here," and that was done by the history of Christianity, especially by the Reformation. That is roughly Hegel's thesis on the philosophy of history, and there is something to that from a purely philosophical point of view. Ya?

Student: What do you mean, from a philosophical point of view?

LS: Ya, well, is this so hard to understand?

Same Student: I mean, as opposed to what view?

LS: The Christian. Because I assume, contrary to Hegel, that Hegel's interpretation of Christianity is not the Christian interpretation of Christianity. But this is a long question, and many books have been written, many articles—and are being written, and will be written: Where precisely does Hegel stand there? That is a long question. There was a seminar on Hegel here, I believe, was there not? Or was this in—ya, there was a seminar.

Mr. Berns: A faculty seminar on Hegel.

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Berns: There was a faculty seminar on Hegel, on the *Phenomenology*. Just on the Preface of the *Phenomenology*.[2]

LS: Oh, I see, not on the *Philosophy of History*.

Student: No, Mr. Strauss thinks that there used to be a seminar on Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, which is—

Mr. Berns: Oh, there still is, in the senior year.

[xxiii] Plato *Phaedo* 60a.

Student: Yeah.

LS: Ya, I suppose this controversy plays a certain role in that seminar, too.

Student: Were you suggesting earlier in response to Mr. Berns that there is tension between loyalty to a city like Athens and loyalty to a nation like the United States? Once the fatherland becomes not a city, but a nation?

LS: Some things remain common. I mean, it changes—quantity is not irrelevant.

Same Student: But not graves so much as regime.

LS: Ya. Ya, but still, "land of my fathers."

Student: Custom.

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: "Land of my fathers" is custom.

LS: Ya.

Student: For instance, in Germany . . . I remember, you lived in town which is, I don't know, a mile away from the other . . and they would say, "Oh, I'm not a Badenser, I'm a Württemberger," they used to say.

Student: . . . the song, The Land Where My Fathers Died . . .

LS: Ya, and Baden and Württemberg were in a way creations of Napoleon, so rather late things. You know?

Student: Yeah, but it was still probably based on the accent which was there, on the scenery which was there and . . .

LS: Ya, but still—well, surely there is a difference between the modern state and the modern so-called . . . state, and to say nothing of such a tremendous country like the United States on the one hand, and ancient classic *polis* on the other. There is no question about that. But there is also something in common. Ya. Now let us see if we can read perhaps a few more pages and bring to an end our reading of book 6. Ya, for example, chapter 95, beginning.

Reader:
The same spring the Spartans marched against Argos and got as far as Cleonae. Here an earthquake occurred, and they went back again.

LS: So an earthquake ruins the Spartan expedition, and of course there is nothing said that the earthquake as earthquake did it; that is, the earthquake as a divine sign, ya, a warning. Then the operations in Syracuse follow. There is another Syracusan defeat in chapter 97, and let us turn to chapter[s] 120—102, I'm sorry, 102, paragraph 4. Will you read that?

Reader: Is this about Nicias starting a fire?

LS: There is an Athenian victory, where they induce the Syracusans to withdraw. Now do you have the beginning of chapter 103? Will you read that a bit?

Reader:
After this the Athenians put up a trophy, gave the Syracusans back their dead under an armistice, and received the bodies of Lamachus and those who had died with him. (6.103)

LS: Lamachus had been the third Athenian commander apart from Nicias and Alcibiades, and he had fallen. Yes?

Reader:
They now had their entire force, naval and military, all together, and, beginning from Epipolae and the cliffs, they built a double wall down to the sea, shutting the Syracusans in. Supplies for the army were now being brought in from all parts of Italy; many of the Sicels, too, who had previously been waiting to see how things went, now allied themselves with the Athenians, who were also reinforced by three fifty-oared ships from Etruria. Everything, in fact, was going as they hoped. The Syracusans, with no kind of help coming to them from the Peloponnese, no longer thought that they could win the war, and were beginning to discuss terms of surrender among themselves and with Nicias, who was now, after the death of Lamachus, in sole command. Nothing was definitely settled, but, as might have been expected considering their difficulties and the fact that they were now more closely besieged than ever, a number of overtures were made to Nicias, and there was still more of the same kind of discussion inside the city. Their present misfortunes also led to a suspicious attitude among themselves, and, thinking that the harm had come from the bad luck or the treachery of the generals under whom they had suffered these defeats, they deposed the generals they had and replaced them by others—Heraclides, Eucles, and Tellias. (6.103)

LS: So the situation looks excellent for the Athenians. But the Spartans haven't committed, haven't done anything yet, as is emphasized here. Ya. Now I would like to make only one—oh ya, we should read chapter 104. Yes?

Reader:
Meanwhile the Spartan Gylippus and the ships from Corinth were off Leucas, all anxious to come to the help of Sicily as quickly as possible. The news that reached them, however, was alarming, and all supported the untrue story that Syracuse was now entirely cut off by the blockading walls. Gylippus therefore gave up all hope of Sicily, but, as he wanted to preserve Italy, he and the Corinthian Pythen, with two Spartan and two Corinthian ships, hurriedly crossed the Ionian gulf to Tarentum. The Corinthians were to man, in addition to their own ten ships, two Leucadian and two Ambraciot ships and were then to follow after him. From

Tarentum Gylippus sent an embassy to Thurii and renewed the rights of citizenship which his father had had there. He failed, however— (6.104)

LS: Gylippus, in case this has not become clear, Gylippus is the commander-in-chief of the Spartans, of the Peloponnesians.

Reader:
He failed, however, to gain the support of Thurii and put to sea again and sailed along the Italian coast. Opposite the Terinean Gulf he was caught and driven out to sea by the wind, which blows very violently in these parts when it sets from the north. After an extremely stormy passage he got back to Tarentum, where he dragged up on shore and refitted the ships which had suffered most from the storm. Nicias heard of his coming but, like the Thurians, despised the small number of his ships and, thinking that they could only be operating as privateers, took no precautions against them for the moment. (6.104)

LS: Ya. So Nicias, we can say—and that is to be confirmed by the sequel—is hopeful. He's not cautious about it. And that contributes to the Athenian ruin. And looking over book 6, I found that there is no mention of gods there since the dialogue on Melos. And there, as we've seen, not the gods are mentioned but the divine, which is somewhat vaguer expression—that may well be compatible with the view that there is only one divine power and not the gods. There is one passage which is of some interest in connection with this question, and that is in book 6, chapter 32. Will you read that, please?

Reader: 32?

LS: Ya.

Reader:.
When the ships were manned and everything had been taken aboard which they meant to take with them on the voyage, silence was commanded by the sound of the trumpet—

LS: Ya, this is before the departure of the Athenian fleet for Sicily. Yes?

Reader:
and the customary prayers made before putting to sea were offered up, not by each ship separately, but by them all together following the words of a herald. The whole army had wine poured out into bowls, and officers and men made their libations from cups of gold and of silver. The crowds on the shore also, the citizens and others who wished well to the expedition, joined together in the prayers. Then, when the hymn had been sung and the libations finished, they put out to sea, first sailing out in column, and then racing each other as far as Aegina. (6.32)

LS: Ya, so what we call . . . of course by no means absent here: prayers are offered before the departure for Sicily, but the *word* "gods" doesn't occur. Ya?

Student: Mr. Strauss, what is the libation, what is the exact procedure there?

LS: That—well, you spend wine for the gods, just as in sacrifices the blood or the meat—

Student: Yeah, but how do you . . .

LS: The details I do not know, but I do know that that—

Student: . . .

LS: Ya, in honor of the gods.

Student: . . .

LS: But it can easily be looked up if you take some *Realenzyklopädie*, as the Germans call it. The German is called Pauly-Wissowa, and there is surely an English one too, about these Greek antiquities, and if you look it up under "libations," you will get some information which will satisfy your curiosity, at least for the time being. So now we have reached the end of book 6 and come now to book 7.

Student: Will you be willing to entertain a few more questions?

LS: Yeah, sure! That's what I am here for!

Same Student: I would like to press what Mr. Kaplan was suggesting before about what he called the supermen.

LS: Yes?

Same Student: I'd like you to spell out a bit more why that argument isn't sufficient or why you wouldn't pose it as a model. That is, it seems to me that argument, that exact argument might be used in other circumstances if there wasn't, say, just one man concerned, or given a different character of the regime other than the Athenian. That there might be circumstances where you really wholesale turn against the fatherland.

LS: Ya, sure. But I thought first of the simpler case of a superior man whom no one in his senses can criticize for what he did. Alfred the Great, was he not such a man, to take an English example?[xxiv]

Same Student: I don't know the . . .

LS: Alfred the Great, and there are other such people. And now as for this question, for example, the question of what would be regarded by *mere* lawyers as disloyalty: the disloyalty can be very well be loyalty to a higher cause. I believe that also doesn't need a long argument. If someone is regarded as disloyal by a Hitlerite or Bolshevik court of justice, I do not believe it would make the slightest impression on any of us; it only would show that this man was an anti-Hitlerite or an

[xxiv] Alfred (848-899 CE), legendary king first of the West Saxons then of all the Anglo-Saxons, proverbial for virtue and wisdom.

anti-Bolshevik, and what's wrong with that? That's clear. And the many things which have been done illegally by people who tried and still are trying to escape from these tyrannies, who can blame these people? Perhaps members of their families who are left back unprotected and more in danger than before—possibly; that is a hard question. But that is a question which depends—which the individual on the spot must decide as [a] sensible man, *phronimos* [φρόνιμος] considering the circumstances. Universal rules are not possible. The universal rule—you have to obey, period—is not a reasonable rule. And I think it is shown in a way best in that work which is frequently regarded as the greatest document in favor of absolute obedience, namely, Plato's *Crito*, where Socrates seems to say [that] you have to obey the laws regardless, and when you read more closely you see that that is not what Socrates says. What Socrates generally suggests is: obey the laws. That is, I would say, a rule of thumb. But there is no rule without exceptions, and what the exceptions are is indicated there—I mean, for example, by the variety of arguments. The *polis* is—the obligation to obey the law is based on a contract. You have obligated yourself to obey the laws, and you must keep your contract as a free man. But on the other hand, you are also described as a *slave* of the *polis*, meaning that it's not a free contract. Then when he speaks about [how] the laws are made to appeal to Socrates and say: "What is wrong with us that you try to disobey us? Did we not bring you up decently? Were we not responsible for your birth by establishing marriage laws, so that you are a respectable man and not a bastard? Number one. Then are we not responsible for the good education in gymnastics and music you got?" "Yes," Socrates says. But there were other Athenian institutions which the laws do not mention and which Socrates mentions elsewhere—in the *Apology* for example, but even, at least allusively, in the *Crito*—which were not so good; for example, the Athenian criminal law, and about that he is silent.

So the laws are not—you never find a country in which the laws are all perfect. And here is where the question of judgment comes in: which degree of injustice, of folly, must be borne by a sensible man and which cannot be borne. And that is largely, that is a difficult question in which all kinds of factors come in, not the least of which is age, because young people are more impatient—at least I read this in the newspapers—than older people, and therefore willing to rebel where more mature people would say, "Well, that is not so good. Look at other countries, what happened there." But one can't say much about this subject in this country, since one of the most conservative men, at least conservative presidents which this country had in the last fifty years, had established the principle: He who is old enough to fight is old enough to vote,[xxv] and therewith questioned a great principle of politics, that fighting and voting are [not] activities of the same order. I mean President Eisenhower, in case there is any doubt, whom I admire otherwise, but this, I thought, was one of his less enlightened utterances.

Same Student: Then the basis for criticizing Alcibiades is that he sees himself as the end of things rather than recognizing anything higher than himself.

LS: Ya. Ya, in the *First Alcibiades*, that is a Platonic dialogue, there he comes out quite clearly, what he would like to be is something like the King of Persia. You know? He, the ruler of practically all men, and he doesn't have to give an account of what he is doing to anybody else, and of course also the richest of men. And Socrates tries to show him that even if he had all these

[xxv] See President Eisenhower's State of the Union Address, 1954.

things, he could be the most miserable of men. I believe you can figure that out without Socrates's help.

Student: I'm still troubled by the complicity of Athens in the fall of Alcibiades. They brought him on.

LS: Ya, ya! Yes, you see that, if one speaks of such things as tragedy. That was the tragedy of Athens. Athens could have won on Sicily if it had had a military leader there like Alcibiades, or, more precisely, if Alcibiades had been the military leader. But on the other hand, they couldn't *trust* Alcibiades because of the graves of their forefathers. They knew that Alcibiades wasn't sound there. What should they do? And therefore when these rumors came, these ugly rumors of the slanderers, they believed the slanderers, and so they called him back and ruined the Scilian—

Same Student: That was the worst possible fate.

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: That was the worst possible fate.

LS: Why?

Same Student: Having sent Alcibiades to Sicily, to call him back. They must have known that he would not return.

LS: Ya, it was possible. There was a considerable opposition, as we have seen, but surely, it was a greater blunder than what the Germans did in 1933, because Hitler was not—I'm sorry, Alcibiades was not as insane as Hitler. Or even if I may quote a high authority in such matters, no lesser man than Stalin: Hitler was a very able man, but basically not intelligent, and the lack of intelligence—ya, Stalin knew something of these matters—and the lack of intelligence showed itself in the fact that he was always chasing two hares at the same time. You know? Stalingrad and the Caucasus, and similar things. Or Leningrad and Stalingrad. Stalin always was, at least from a certain moment on, more limited in his goals, and he became unlimited only when it was absolutely safe to be unlimited, namely, at the end of the Second World War, when he could take over the whole of Eastern Europe without any risk. Stalin was in a way a *timid* man.

Student: I'm sorry?

LS: Stalin was in a way a *timid* man.

Same Student: . . .

LS: . . . he was rather timid. I mean, he was so afraid of the Germans in 1939, you know—in 1941. So he didn't do anything to prepare the Russian army properly, except by this fantastic thing, the purge of the marshals. But I found this saying of Stalin quite exhilarating.

Student: Hmm?

LS: I find this saying of Stalin about Hitler quite exhilarating.

Mrs. Kaplan: . . . small way, Russians feel that the time is on their side.

LS: Ya, ya! Yes.

Mrs. Kaplan: It comes from Asia, where there is completely . . . Time waits for . . . or you do it 'til time comes. . . . So Russians don't really, don't rush very much.

LS: Is there not a fairytale of two animals, one is very slow and one is very quick, one being a hare and the other being what?

Student: Tortoise.

LS: Tortoise.

Mrs. Kaplan: But . . . from Thucydides, the characteristic of Athens. He says it's wonderful about them—just a moment. "Think of this, too, while you are"—this is the . . . of Athens, with Spartans. "Think of this, too: while you are hanging back, they never hesitate; while you stay at home, they are always abroad; for they think that the farther they go the more they will get." They could do it! That's what they do. "While you think that any movement may endanger what you have already done. If they win a victory, they follow it up at once, and if they suffer a defeat, they scarcely fall back at all."[xxvi] So there is a kind of . . .

LS: Ya, this is of course said by the Corinthians in order to stimulate the Spartans to action.

Mrs. Kaplan: But behind this is our author, Thucydides.

LS: Pardon?

Mrs. Kaplan: But behind this speech is our author, Thucydides, who speaks so well.

LS: Ya. Ya, that's true. That was somewhat true.

Mrs. Kaplan: They were ahead of time. And then when they went to Sicily they were not prepared, as we read. They have not enough, they have not enough cavalry, they have not enough money, and they have no provision. And so they . . . rather frivolous . . .

LS: Ya, but the best possible in the circumstances after Nicias had had his say. Well, so I suggest that next time we will try to read book 7 if we can.[3]

[xxvi] Mrs. Kaplan is paraphrasing Thucydides 1.70.

Session 15: no date
Book 7, chapters 1-87

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —to remind you of that, at the Athenian assembly a debate which decides in favor of the [Sicilian] expedition, Nicias being against it and Alcibiades for it. The expedition is prepared along the lines suggested by Nicias. The expedition is a solemn and splendid affair, very far away from this love of beauty combined with thrift for which Pericles had praised Athens. But then something unexpected happened, the mutilation of the Hermae and other impious acts, which are ascribed by rumor to Alcibiades and his friends, and as a consequence he is in danger, but nevertheless the Athenians leave him in command together with Nicias. The armament lands in Sicily, yet Alcibiades is called back nevertheless for criminal proceedings. Nicias is practically sole, the only one in command. What kind of military leader or *strategos* [στρατηγός] was he? Now there is a passage at which we should have a look in book 6. I thought I had not paid sufficient attention to that. In chapter 46, paragraph 2. Do you have that?

Reader:
The generals were at once discouraged, both because this first hope of theirs had come to nothing and also because of the refusal of the people of Rhegium to join forces with them, being, as they were, the first people whom they had attempted to win over and the likeliest ones, too, considering that they were of the same race as the people of Leontini and had always been on good terms with Athens. Nicias indeed was not surprised by the news from Egesta, but the other two generals had not expected it at all. (6.46)

LS: So in other words, Nicias had a better judgment of the situation in Sicily than the others, i.e., Alcibiades especially, because that was the time when Alcibiades was still there. But on the other hand, if you turn to chapter 63, paragraph 2, the second sentence.

Reader:
For after the Athenians had failed to make an immediate attack, as they had at first feared and expected they would do, the Syracusans gained confidence with every day that went by. And now, when they found that their enemies were sailing far away from them on the other side of Sicily, and that they had gone to attack Hybla and failed to take the place by assault, they thought all the worse of them and (just as large numbers are apt to do when they feel confident) kept urging their generals to lead them forward to Catana, since the Athenians would not come against them. Syracusan cavalry on reconnaissance was constantly riding— (6.63)

LS: And so on. So in other words, here we see the defective character of Nicias's generalship: that he doesn't go straight to the goal against Syracuse but is giving the Syracusans time to catch their second wind and therefore makes things more difficult for the Athenians. Now what is Thucydides's judgment about that? Thucydides is known because of his reticence. Hobbes said of him [that] he was the most politic historiographer that ever was, by which he meant that he was very reticent in his judgment and left his reader to discern what the virtues and vices of the various characters are. Let us turn to chapter 72, paragraph 3. That is a speech of Hermocrates, a Syracusan general. Now what does it say?

Reader:
He now raised their spirits and refused to allow them to become despondent because of what had happened. It was not a case, he said, of their spirit having been subdued; what had done the harm was their lack of discipline. Even then they had not been so much outclassed as might have been expected, especially if one considered that they were themselves, as it were, amateurs in the art of war and had been fighting against the most experienced troops in Hellas. What had done great harm, too, was the number of the generals (there were fifteen of them)— (6.72)

LS: And so on. And let us see, in chapter 68 there must also be some mention of this subject. This is of course Hermocrates's judgment, not Thucydides's judgment. Ya? Now that seems to be—68 is also a speech, it's not Thucydides. At any rate, one has always to consider that; one cannot say this too often, when a judgment is passed, whether it is passed by Thucydides or by a character of Thucydides, and Thucydides cannot be identified with any of his characters, however clever. And even more than that: even Thucydides's own judgments may be deliberately reticent so that he suppresses part of his judgment, and we have to find out—I think a singular, a good example will be that of Nicias in book 7, to which we shall come very soon. Ya. I think we leave it at that for the time being.

Now the situation of the Athenians before Syracuse was rather favorable until the arrival of the Peloponnesian relief force under the command of Gylippus, a Spartan, and this relief force consisted chiefly of Spartans and Corinthians. At that time Syracuse was almost completely invested, and the situation looked rather hopeless for them. There was a kind of last minute relief thanks to the arrival of Gylippus and his forces. Now let me turn now to book 6. No, it's book 7, I beg your pardon. Book 7, chapter 3, near the beginning. This is the middle of the chapter: "When Gylippus." Do you have that?

Reader:
Gylippus, however, saw that the Syracusans were in a disorganized state and could not easily be brought into line, and so he withdrew his army to a place where the ground was more open. Nicias, instead of leading the Athenians forward against him, remained in a defensive position by the wall, and when Gylippus saw that they were not—

LS: More literally, he "remained at rest." You know, he was a cautious man and not given to quick movements like Alcibiades and others, or Pericles. Yes?

Reader:
When Gylippus saw that they were not going to attack, he led off his army to the high ground of Temenitis and there spent the night. (7.3)

LS: Ya. So this means that Gylippus has here right at the beginning an advantage because of his more daring character. And in chapter 4, at the end of paragraph 4, it is said that Nicias gave more attention now to the naval war. He saw that since the arrival of Gylippus the land operations offered no longer the same hopes, and that meant of course a radical change in the strategic situation. Between next—chapter 8, well, Nicias sends a kind of S.O.S to Athens: he needs reinforcements, both terrestrial and naval. His caution, which was always a great, major factor in his makeup, increased much. And then Thucydides gives us in chapters 10 to 15

Nicias's letter to Athens, in which Nicias explains to the Athenians what he needs. Needless to say that there is a considerable emphasis on the lack of cavalry which makes it impossible to operate properly [and] especially prevents pursuit of the Syracusans by the Athenians, in case the Athenians had won a battle because of that. We don't have to read that. Please.

Same Student: In the text, Thucydides before he states the letter, uses the same phrase, *dēlousan toiade* [δηλοῦσαν τοιάδε].

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: He uses the *toiade* [τοιάδε].

LS: Ya.

Same Student: Why does he do that?

LS: To indicate this is practically stylistically the same as so-called quoted speech.

Same Student: But it was a letter. And I'm surprised that since he did in other places give the texts of the treaties—

LS: Ya, the treaties are a special case. The treaties are a special case, because who is the author of a treaty?

Student: The people.

LS: Pardon?

Same Student: The government.

LS: No, that's not exactly right. Both parties.

Student: Both?

LS: Say, the Spartans and the Athenians, and therefore this is not a partial statement, but in a way a complete and impartial statement, that on which the two sides have agreed. Thucydides presents in each case the situation as it appeared to the speaker. For example, say when Pericles explains his policy from the Athenian point of view at this particular time and also with due consideration of the mood of the Athenians, it is a partial statement in the double meaning of partial. You know? What Thucydides gives in the whole work is an *impartial* statement, meaning a statement of the whole situation by someone who is not identified with either party. There was a French novelist or what called Romain Rolland,[i] who wrote books since the First World War and had one, *Au-dessus de la mêlée, Above the turmoil of battle.* And that is what Thucydides

[i] Romain Rolland (1866-1944), French novelist, playwright, and essayist. *Au dessus de la mêlée* (1914) was a pacifist tract denouncing the Great War; it proved intensely controversial as most French writers supported the war. Rolland received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1915.

does. I mean, of course he is an Athenian. He makes it clear enough at the beginning, and he is an Athenian patriot, but his horizon is not limited by the interests and prejudices of Athens. So if we have these two polar things, the partial statements of the speakers and the impartial *logos* [λόγος] of Thucydides, the treaties are something in between. They are a kind of approximation on the political plane for Thucydides's . . . you can say they are a caricature of what Thucydides is doing—I have nothing against that—but it's surely not the same as a speech of a politically active speaker. Ya? It participates in a manner in impartiality. And that this is a bit of satire on most peace treaties ever made, Thucydides, I believe, would be the first to admit. But still, what a peace treaty should be is exactly that . . . Is this sufficient as an answer to your question?

Same Student: It raises other questions, but these will come.

LS: I beg your pardon?

Student: It raises in my mind other questions which will come later.

LS: Good. There is only one little point at the end of chapter 8, if you will read the last sentence.

Reader:
His policy now was to stand more upon the defensive and to avoid all unnecessary risks.

LS: Ya. Yes?

Student: Do you think that the election of Nicias to the generalship of Athens somehow at this point reflected some kind of failure of nerve from the Athenians? We started with Pericles and then went to Alcibiades, and now we have Nicias.

LS: Ya, but Alcibiades was really a somewhat dubious character.

Same Student: Well, but decisive. I just meant whether the character of the Athenians as a people who somehow, you know, they were lacking in nerve at the essential moment.

LS: Ya. Well, one reason why Nicias was elected was this: he had an unblemished record. He had always been lucky. And according to the way of thinking of the Athenians, you choose rather a general who never lost a battle than any other general who may be much brighter but who was not so lucky. It is, you can say, an irrational consideration, given the irrational character of chance and intelligence.

Same Student: That's hard to reconcile with the Athenian success in battle, because they succeeded because they were so cautious. I mean, it seemed that both Pericles and Alcibiades, you know, might have been elected to the generalship not having lost battles, but that seems to be a matter of chance, too. I mean, they were willing to go out on a limb.

LS: Ya, that is the question, whether their success—by the way, Pericles got into great troubles, you know, a few times and was not reelected as general for some years and had all kinds of trouble. But on the whole, that was clear, I think, to the average Athenian, that Nicias didn't have

the stature of Pericles. And here—but Pericles was dead, and the alternative was Alcibiades, and to Alcibiades they would not wish to entrust the fate of the city because he was too great a gambler, and Nicias was the opposite of a gambler.

Same Student: But the whole Sicilian expedition was a gamble, wasn't it? I mean—

LS: Ya, ya, but still there is a difference—ya, but still, if you gamble, you can gamble cautiously and—

Same Student: But that's where they're wrong.

LS: Ya. Ya, but Nicias tried his best to prevent it, but he didn't succeed. Alcibiades was too clever, as you have seen in how he arranged it that he was in command. I mean: It's all right, I am young and have the infirmities of youth. Combine my command with that of Nicias, an experienced man, who is no longer young and who has been so lucky, and then you have both: you have daring and caution combined. What better solution? You know? A compromise solution. But there are compromises of one kind and of the other. There was once a prime minister in Israel called Eshkol,[ii] who was famous for his compromisism, so much so that they told that when he goes to a café and the waiter asks him, "Do you want tea or coffee?" He said, "Half and half." [Laughter] That's one way of solving the problem. Yes?

Same Student: I just wanted to say that their calling back of Alcibiades does seem to be a failure of nerve, it seemed probably—

LS: Ya, but that was the point. The Athenians were on the one hand enamored of Alcibiades's brilliance and daring, and on the other hand they were god-fearing, and the two things were in conflict. And in Alcibiades's absence, the enemies of Alcibiades strengthened the side of what might be called by nasty people fundamentalism in Athens, and therefore they called him back and didn't know that they would harm themselves much more. In other words, the Athenian ambassadors on Melos—you know these were perfectly enlightened men who were not influenced by such things like mutilation of Hermae and other impious deeds, but this was a small group of the upper crust. The mass of the Athenians thought differently, and when they had to make the decision, then they said: We must fall back on Nicias and his caution and piety. If the Athenians had been all men like the ambassadors on Melos, Alcibiades would not have been called back.

Same Student: But does that imply that, let's say, when the Corinthians give speeches about the Athenians in the beginning of the book—

LS: Yes.

Student: Does that imply they are really talking about the leaders of the city at a particular time, whether they are cautious or energetic?

LS: Ya, ya.

[ii] Levi Eshkol, born L.Y. Shkolnik (1895-1969), Prime Minister of Israel 1963-69.

Same Student: I mean, the people as a whole are always going to be suspicious, you know, and fundamentalists.

LS: Well, when you speak of a city or a nation, and its policy and its science, who do you mean? Do you mean every individual, or do you mean the ruling circles? Because the ruling circles are the ones who will determine what the simple man in the street thinks, feels, and does. You know? So the Corinthians speak about the general line of Athenian policy and know of course that there are so many poor shopkeepers, petits bourgeois, ya?, who are perfectly innocent of any imperialistic inclinations but might be proud of their empire. And yet the policy is not made by these people, who at the most may vote for imperialist policy in the assembly but they are not the guiding minds. I think Thucydides is very wise, that he speaks of the Athenians, the Corinthians and so on as if they were clear unities, although he knows that they are rent by discord of various kinds; for example, between the powerful and the poor, and others. That is so: the *polis* or state, or however you call it, is in one sense a unity, and what a unity. And on the other hand it is a very composite thing, which can easily disintegrate. You know?

Same Student: Do you think that it is a specific man with a certain character who forms the unity of the city? I mean, it doesn't seem to depend on something institutional, because if it did, the people, I think, wouldn't have been so—well, they wouldn't have called back Nicias, wouldn't have called back Alcibiades and so forth.

LS: Ya, well, you put the question on a very broad basis. Thucydides has told us everything. How did it begin? That was not a mass movement, there was not a kind of manifest destiny, a party, or similar things in Europe. But there was an individual called Themistocles, who saw in a crucial moment the chance that Athens could become *the* leading naval power, and that meant even much more than merely the leading naval power. He grasped the chance. He was—by a mixture of courage and ruse, he built up the Athenian Empire. Once it was there, the little Athenians, the little men, enjoyed the great advantages. They were sent out to watch these dependent islands and so on, and that meant of course all kinds of, how do you call it? Pork barrel? Is this is the right word? Ya. And they are Athenians, you see, they held their heads high and that is also pleasant for little people. But still, without Themistocles, no Athenian empire. You know the story told at the beginning of Plato's *Republic*, when a man from a small island, Seriphus, said: If you were not an Athenian, you would never have become such a great man. And he said—what did Themistocles say? And if he, if that Seriphian—what, do you remember it?

Student: That if he, Themistocles, had been from this little island, from Seriphus, and he would never have made it from Seriphus, and that's true. But if that Seriphian had been from Athens, he would not have made a name for himself either.[iii]

LS: Ya. Ya, you see? So originally, of course, Athens had the opportunities: the wonderful harbor, wonderful geographic situation, and all these other things, and a general—apparently the Athenians were an unusually intelligent people—I mean, if one can say such things in our century where it is said that all men are by nature equal, in the sense that there are not people

[iii] Plato *Republic* 329e-330a.

more gifted than others, but the popular notion in former times was that there is such a difference. Some nations are more gifted than others, and the Athenians were regarded as particularly clever, flexible, *polytropoi* [πολύτροποι].[iv] An Odyssean element, and that is true. But still, without Themistocles, no Athenian empire, and Themistocles had the good fortune to be followed by such people as Pericles, so that a terrific empire . . . speaking, was built up.

Same Student: Does that imply—would you consider the Athenian success to be a matter of chance or fortune? Because you just said good fortune, and it would seem that they didn't try to . . . or to formalize the ingredients for success that existed in Athens.

LS: No, that I would not trace it to chance. I know very little about kangaroos, and what I know I learned from Mr. . . . , but there are various breeds, various kinds of kangaroos: some are larger, some are smaller, some are fatter, some are thinner, and so on and so on. And that's not a matter of chance: there are natural differences among the kangaroos. Theoretically there is no reason why there should not be natural differences among human beings. You know?

Same Student: Well, I just want to sort of compare the Athenian inconstancy with the Spartan, you know, regularity, and kind of steadfast resistance to the Athenians.

LS: Ya, but that is a complication. The Athenian empire is founded, and Spartans feel menaced. That's intelligible. And then now the question is: Should they resist further Athenian advances or should they not? And that depends, indeed. There is a cleavage there, as you saw, between the ephor Stenelaidas, and the king, Archidamus, and this may very well be a matter of chance, which policy is adopted. This is another story, as is shown by a very simple fact that a policy which may be very reasonable and promising success may be foiled by one of the leaders dying, getting a heart attack. That can happen. It is natural that it can happen, but that it happens in this particular situation, that is *tychē* [τύχη], that is chance.

Same Student: But the Athenians as a whole seem to be peculiarly susceptible to the brilliance or genius of their particular leaders at certain times, whereas the Athenians—the Spartans rather, seem not to be so dependent on peculiarities.

LS: Ya, but that is due to a certain stolidity, but also to a certain immovability. The Athenians were more impressionable. There are so many stories. For example, when Spartans came into the Athenian assembly as guests and when—no, they were there, and then Athenians, an old Athenian general came in, and the Spartans, as well-bred men, rose from their seats and offered them to the old Athenian gentleman. And then the Athenian public [LS claps his hands] applauded this fine action. But no Athenian thought of offering his seat to the . . . You know? So the Athenians were open to impressions, and the Spartans were in this, as well as in other respects, more mobile,[1] but they liked the stolidity. But lest we think that the Spartans were wonderful men who should be held up as models of human conduct, Thucydides tells us quite a few awful stories about what the Spartans did and behaved on the whole in a much more beastly manner than the Athenians. Yes, the questions which you raise are a very important questions. Today there is a whole discipline devoted—and it is called political sociology. Did you ever hear of it?

[iv] "Of many turns" (i.e. wily), Homer's favorite epithet for Odysseus.

Student: Unfortunately, yes.

LS: I grant that that's unfortunate, but you have to—but that exists, meaning to see the composition of the state, of various parts and how these various parts interact on each other, helping one another, ruining one another, and so on. That is clear. And Thucydides, in his wisdom, sees these things and yet continues to speak of *the* Athenians and *the* Corinthians, because these unities are important and hitherto have always been decisive. And, I mean, if in the future that should change and there should be a free Canada, as General de Gaulle believed,[v] or maybe a free Bretagne, separating from France, and what happens in the papers and other matters. But these are all possibilities of disintegration which always exist and which show the dubious character of the unity of the state. And yet this unity exists. How did Nietzsche, who was aware of these problems, he called once the state "the cold monster,"[vi] an expression which was taken up by de Gaulle, but I believe with this difference: whereas Nietzsche truly shuddered, de Gaulle stroked it, "My dear good, cold monster." [Laughter] So now let us turn to chapter 18, paragraph 2.

Reader: This is the top of page 442. Beginning with Alcibiades?

LS: Well, not in Thucydides, but all right.

Reader:
Alcibiades, too, was constantly urging them to fortify Decelea and to carry on the war with vigour. But what chiefly encouraged the Spartans to act with energy was their belief that Athens, with two wars on her hands—one against them and one against the Sicilians—would be now easier to crush. There was also the fact that the Spartans considered that Athens had been the first to break the peace treaty. In the first war they thought that the fault had been more on their side—

LS: The first war meaning in 431, ya? And the second war is that after the peace of Nicias. Yes?

Reader:
partly because the Thebans had entered Plataea in peace time and partly because, in spite of the provision in the previous treaty that there should be no recourse to arms if arbitration were offered, they themselves had not accepted the Athenian offer of arbitration. They therefore thought that there was some justice in the misfortunes they had suffered and took to heart the disaster of Pylos and their other defeats.

LS: So let us stop there. Ya, this is the difference between Sparta and Athens: the Spartans trace their misfortune in the first war, and which culminated in the Pylos affair, as a misfortune, a "lack of luck" which was deserved because they broke the treaty. And here their piety is of course behind that: you can't break oaths without paying for that; the gods will interfere. But this

[v] Strauss meant to say a free Quebec, having separated from Canada, which cause de Gaulle supported in a notorious speech delivered in Montreal on July 24, 1967.
[vi] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part 1, Discourse 11, "On the New Idol."

is the Spartan belief; whether Thucydides believes this is an entirely different question, which cannot be settled on the basic of this passage.

Ya, and then it comes—one of the most moving and shocking stories in the whole work in chapters 27 to 30, and that is the story of Mycalessus. The Athenians got into great financial troubles because of the occupation of Decelea by the Spartans, and they wanted to get rid of some of their mercenary troops, some of them being Thracians—that is, what would this be now? Bulgaria or part of Greece? At any rate, people from there were regarded as particularly cruel, and they were sent home to avoid further inflation or other war costs, and on the way there they were told to go home as quickly as possible, which they did, but they used the opportunity for acting along their inherited ways. Now where should we begin to read? We can't read the whole.

Student: Chapter 29?

LS: Chapter 29, ya. Ya?

Reader:
In their present financial difficulties, the Athenians had no wish to incur additional expense, and therefore sent back at once the Thracians who had arrived too late to serve with Demosthenes. Diitrephes was appointed to command them on their return journey and, as they were to sail through the Euripus, he was instructed to use them in doing whatever damage he could to the enemy on their voyage along the coast. He first landed them at Tanagra and carried off some plunder in a quick raid; then he sailed through the Euripus in the evening from Chalcis in Euboea, landed in Boeotia, and led them against Mycalessus. He spent the night unobserved near the temple of Hermes, which is nearly two miles from Mycalessus, and at daybreak assaulted the city, which is not a big one, and captured it. The inhabitants were caught off their guard, since they never expected that anyone would come so far from the sea to attack them. Their wall, too, was weak and in some places had collapsed, while in others it had not been built at all high, and the gates were open, since they had no fear of being attacked. The Thracians burst into Mycalessus, sacked the houses and temples, and butchered the inhabitants, sparing neither the young nor the old, but methodically killing everyone they met, women and children alike, and even the— (7.29)

LS: "Methodically" is of course much too scientific a translation. "In a row" would be a better translation, "one after the other." In other words, when they saw one, they killed him, and when they saw the next, they killed him, too. We usually don't call this methodical. I mean, there was no command given to that effect, I assume; they just used the opportunity. Yes?

Reader:
and even the farm animals and every living thing they saw. For the Thracian race, like all the most bloodthirsty barbarians, are always particularly bloodthirsty when everything is going their own way. So now there was confusion on all sides and death in every shape and form. Among other things, they broke into a boys' school, the largest in the place, into which the children had just entered, and killed every one of them. Thus disaster fell upon the entire city, a disaster more complete than any, more sudden and more horrible. (7.29)

The Thebans meanwhile heard the news and came to the rescue. They caught up with the Thracians before they had gone far, took away their booty, struck terror into them, and drove them down to the Euripus and the sea, where the boats that had brought them were lying at anchor. Most of those who were killed were killed while embarking, since they did not know how to swim, and the crews, when they saw what was happening on shore, anchored their ships out of range of the arrows. In the rest of the retreat the Thracians did very creditably against the Theban cavalry, which attacked them first, and put up a good defense by adopting the tactics of their country, that is to say by charging out in detachments and then falling back again. (7.30)

LS: You see how fair Thucydides is, that even in the case of these beasts, he admits that he thought they fought well.

Reader:
In this part of the action only a few of them were killed, but a considerable number who had stayed behind to plunder were destroyed in the town itself. Altogether the Thracians lost 250 out of 1,300 men. Of the Thebans and others who were in the relief force about twenty cavalrymen and hoplites were killed, including Scirphondas, who was one of the Commanders of Boeotia. Mycalessus lost a considerable part of its population. It was a small city, but in the disaster just described its people suffered calamities as pitiable as any which took place during the war. (7.30)

LS: Ya. In other words, Thucydides did not think "*à la guerre comme à la guerre*":if there is war, such things happen, you have to take them in their stride. He finds it terrible but indeed unavoidable. Once you have such mercenaries and have to send them home without sufficient supervision,[vii] what can you do? That's it. Of course one would have to compare the misery of Mycalessus with other miseries described by Thucydides, where he uses similar expressions as here about the pitiable character of what happened. I mean, for example, in Plataea, Pylos—[viii] . . . the situation, very erratic. The Athenians lose a nocturnal battle. Then there takes place a deliberation between the Athenians now in command . . . then there follows a deliberation between the Athenian generals now in command, Nicias and Demosthenes, in chapters 47 to 49. There is a speech of Demosthenes, but reported, not quoted; and there is also a reported opinion, again not quoted, of Nicias at the beginning of chapter 48. There is a difficulty here in finding out what is it that sways Nicias. Does he still have hope? And he obviously has hopes: there are secret negotiations going on with the rich people in Syracuse, who would prefer an arrangement with Athens and Nicias, and so Nicias has hopes that there might be some help; but on the other hand he has also great fear of the Athenians because Demosthenes thinks they should give up the expedition right away before disaster reaches them. But Nicias is not quite frank because he doesn't wish to let down his friends in Syracuse, who after all are the enemies of Athens. And the reason why—one motive of Nicias is that he knows the natures of the Athenians. Even the soldiers who are now very dissatisfied with the miserable situation, when they come back to Athens they may be incited by the demagogues there to say that Nicias had been bribed by the Syracusans to leave Sicily, and they go with that demagoguery. And so these natures of the

[vii] Strauss seems to overlook that the Thracians were under the command of the Athenian Diitrephes, and that it was he who had unleashed them on Mycalessus.
[viii] There is a break in the tape at this point. There is a large lacuna in the discussion, as we hear nothing of chapters 31 through 46.

Athenians, they are a major factor, and you must never forget that when you read that statement in book 2, chapter 65, Thucydides's overall judgment on the Peloponnesian War, you know, at the end of this eulogy of Pericles: the war could have been won. And he speaks there of some derivative things: the rivalries between the people who would like to take the place of Pericles, but there was a deeper underlying reason and this was the natures of the Athenians, which gave these rivalries their particular character and made it possible—for example, made possible the expulsion of Alcibiades and his recall. But Nicias is still hesitant because he has hopes that agreement could be reached with Syracuse and [because of] the fear of what the Athenian *demos* might do to him if he were to leave Sicily. And now another factor comes in which is important, in chapter 50. Let us take first the last sentence of chapter 49.

Reader:
Nicias, however, continued to oppose the idea, and in the whole business a kind of lack of resolution began to appear; there was procrastination, and at the same time a feeling that Nicias, in sticking so firmly to his point, might have some special sources of information. So the Athenians delayed and went on staying where they were. (7.49)

LS: Ya, so this delay and this hesitation, this . . . aggravates the situation greatly. And now there comes this new factor to which I referred, in chapter 50, paragraph 4. And while they were vacillating or hesitating, although everything was ready, ya?, then there came an eclipse of the moon.[ix] Read that.

Reader:
When everything was ready and they were on the point of sailing, there was an eclipse of the moon, which was at the full. Most of the Athenians took this event so seriously that they now urged the generals to wait, and Nicias, who was rather over-inclined to divination and such things, said that, until they had waited for the thrice nine days recommended by the soothsayers, he would not even join in any further discussion on how the move could be made. So the Athenians, delayed by the eclipse, stayed on afterwards.

LS: Ya. So here this other factor, which is crucial and which is connected to with Nicias's character as a whole: his being given exaggeratedly to divination and frenzy—which would be a somewhat more literal translation; one could also say superstition[x]—comes in and has the opposite of a helpful effect on the salvation of the Athenians. Now the situation of the Athenians gets worse and worse, discouragement and repentance grips the Athenians forces, repentance that they had voted for the expedition to Sicly and now they cannot get out easily.

And there is 57, paragraph 7. Now Thucydides speaks here of how the various Greek cities and tribes sided, some with the Athenians, some with the Spartans, and racial considerations played no role: mere power politics, one could say. But nevertheless, a little bit later on, in paragraph 10 of the same chapter, when he comes to speak of the Acarnanians, do you have that? Most of them were on the Athenians' side out of friendship for Demosthenes, so what they now call a

[ix] The eclipse of the moon occurs only after the situation of the Athenians has deteriorated still further and the generals have now resolved to depart (7.50.3).
[x] While the text speaks clearly of Nicias's addiction to divination, there is no obvious candidate for being rendered as frenzy or superstition.

sentimental factor, and nevertheless in spite of the power politics. Demosthenes must have been a very amiable man. One knows very little about him. He seems to have been a relative of Thucydides.[xi] He was the one, you know, who arranged the Pylos affair, and he was so clever after he had been defeated the year before in Aetolia: he stayed away from home, where it could have been uncomfortable for him, and waited until he had won a splendid victory, and then he could risk the return. That was the situation there.

Then in chapter 60 to 64 there is a speech of Nicias quoted, not merely reported, but his hope is still—he still retains his hope although the situation has become aggravated once again. Then he gives the speech of the enemy commanders, which is also quoted. In none of these speeches is any mention of or reference to the gods. Chapter 67, paragraph 4, that's the last paragraph in chapter 74—in chapter 67, I'm sorry. A speech of the anti-Athenian commanders. Ya. That's the last sentence.

Reader:
"The fact is that their sufferings have been so overwhelming that they have been forced by the hoplessness of their present position into a state of desperation where, trusting in luck more than in good management, they will take their chance, as best they may, and either force their way out and sail away or else, after the attempt, make their retreat by land, since they know that things could not be worse for them than they are at present."

LS: So the Athenians, commanded by the cautious, sober Nicias are brought into a situation in which they can trust only chance and not any human foresight or preparation, so much has the situation deteriorated. In Nicias's speech, which follows soon and which is reported only, there is an interesting expression. Chapter 69, what Nicias says in order to encourage the individual soldiers. Do you have that?

Reader: Yes.

LS: Please read it.

Reader:
And Nicias, half-distraught by the present position, realizing how much was at stake and how imminent already the hazard, and thinking, as men do think in moments of great crisis, that when everything has been done there is still something that needs doing, when everything has been said there is still something left unsaid, again called to him personally all the captains of triremes, man by man, addressing each by his father's name and his own name and the name of his tribe. He entreated those who had an established and brilliant reputation not to betray that reputation now, and those whose ancestors were famous men not to deface the great deeds of their forbears; he reminded them of their country, the freest in the world, and of how all who lived there had liberty to live their own lives in their own way; and he said other things too—the things that men can be expected to say when they are actually on the edge of the event and do not bother to avoid giving the impression of using conventional language; instead they bring forward the kind of appeals that can generally be used on all occasions: wives, children, gods of the

[xi] Despite Strauss's repetition of this claim, there is no basis for it in Thucydides's text.

native land; yet still they cry out these names aloud, since, in the terror of the moment, they believe that they will help.

LS: The ancestral gods are mentioned here for the first time. The more the crisis, the more critical the situation becomes, and we will see that soon continue. Ya, and then there is a naval battle in the harbor of Syracuse, and the Athenian army watches it, the land army watches it and goes through all kinds of moods. That's a terrific description. There is—we can read only very little. Chapter 71, paragraph 3.

Reader: "The Athenians fear"?

LS: No, when they saw, how their different moods were when they saw their own people winning or losing. Yes?

Reader:
For the Athenians everything depended upon their navy; their fears for the future were like nothing they had ever experienced; and, as the battle swung this way and that, so, inevitably, did their impressions alter as they watched it from the shore. The sight was close in front of them and, as they were not all at once looking in the same direction, some saw that at one point their own side was winning, and took courage at the sight and began to call upon the gods not to deprive them of their salvation— (7.71)

LS: Ya. Here are the gods, and they call on the gods only if there is hope that they might win, not in the other case. Despair and piety, as they are understood by Thucydides, are incompatible. [There] must be some hope; that's important. And therefore the hope given Nicias, if this is an English expression, Nicias [is] given to hope, just as the Melians [are] given to hope—you remember in the Melian dialogue? They are pious, the others are not.

Student: I don't quite understand what this means. When they're fighting and they know that things go badly, they don't ask for things to change, so they go well?

LS: No, not according to Thucydides's discussion. You see, you must not forget that in the first place, these were Greeks, you know, and not descendants in body or mind from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Number one. And number two, this was a particular breed of of Greeks, namely, the Athenians, and this particular Athenian army and navy. But that is—I think it fits, as we will see, when the read the rest of this story, in 75, when the Athenians are already on their retreat into the interior of Sicily, yes, and they are attacked by the light forces, by the slingers and so of the Syracusans. What happened there? They turn to shooting back, ya? And to—well, read from here on, from page 480.

Reader:
Afterwards, when Nicias and Demosthenes thought that the preparations were complete, came the time for the army to move, two days after the naval battle. It was a terrible scene—

LS: Which naval battle was a defeat for the Athenians, because the Syracusans had now learned the right tactics of naval warfare, and that was the end of Athens. Ya?

Reader:
It was a terrible scene, and more than one element in their situation contributed to their dismay. Not only were they retreating after having lost all their ships, and instead of their high hopes now found themselves and the whole city of Athens in danger, but in the actual leaving of the camp there were sad sights for every eye, sad thoughts for every mind to feel. The dead were unburied, and when any man recognized one of his friends lying among them, he was filled with grief and fear; and the living who, whether sick or wounded, were being left behind caused more pain than did the dead to those who were left alive, and were more pitiable than the lost. Their prayers and their lamentations made the rest feel impotent and helpless, as they begged to be taken with them and cried out aloud to every single friend or relative whom they could see; as they hung about the necks of those who had shared tents with them and were now going, following after them as far as they could, and, when their bodily strength failed them, reiterated their cries to heaven and their lamentations as they were left behind. So the whole army was filled with tears and in such distress of mind that they found it difficult to go away even from this land of their enemies when sufferings too great for tears had befallen them already and more still, they feared, awaited them in the dark future ahead. (7.75)

LS: Ya. Ya, and they begged their comrades-in-arms, and somehow they called for divine help, not without a few frenzied requests for help from to the gods, *epitheiasmôn* [ἐπιθειασμῶν]. That is in paragraph 4. And a little bit later, in paragraph 7 of the same chapter, that is the last paragraph of the chapter. “The greatest difference which happened to the Greek armament.”

Reader:
No Hellenic army had ever suffered such a reverse. They had come to enslave others—

Is this the right place?

LS: Ya.

Reader:
They had come to enslave others, and now they were going away, frightened of being enslaved themselves; and instead of the prayers— (7.75)

Just a minute.[xii]

LS: Wan’t it a very fitting moment. [Laughter] Yes?

Reader:
They had come to enslave others, and now they were going away frightened of being enslaved themselves; and instead of the prayers and paeans with which they had sailed out, the words to be heard now were directly contrary and boded evil as they started on their way back—

[xii] In the background there is what sounds like a small chorus singing a hymn.

LS: In other words, like Job's wife says: "Curse God and die."[xiii] Ya? They cursed the gods, they no longer pray to them after the gods have let them down. Yes?

Reader:
sailors travelling on land, trusting in hoplites rather than in ships. Nevertheless, when they considered the greatness of the danger that still hung over them, all this seemed able to be borne. (7.75)

Should I read on?

LS: Ya, read the sequel, which is crucial, I think. 76 and 77.

Reader:
Nicias, seeing the discouragement of the army with its hopes so totally eclipsed, went along the ranks and then did the best he could to encourage and to comfort them, and, as he went from one line to another, he raised his voice louder and louder in his eagerness to be of help and in his wish that the good that his words might do should reach as far as possible. (7.76)

LS: By the way, it had been mentioned that he had been a very sick man, and no longer a youth. You know? Now a speech by Nicias, quoted.

Reader:
"Athenians and allies, even now we must still hope on." (7.77)

LS: Ya, still hope! That is the key word here.

Mr. Kaplan: . . .

LS: I beg your pardon.

Mr. Kaplan: I said the word "hope" is mentioned by the Melians in the Melian dialogue before.

LS: Ya. Ya, sure. That is *the* great—in a way, *the* theme of Thucydides. Yes?

Reader:
"You have been saved from worse straits than these before now. And you must not reproach yourselves too much for the disasters of the past or for your present undeserved sufferings. I myself am physically no stronger than any one among you (in fact you see what my illness has done to me), nor, I think, can anyone be considered to have been more blessed by fortune than I have been in my private life and in other respects; but I am now plunged into the same perils as the meanest man here. Yet throughout my life I have worshipped the gods as I ought, and my conduct towards men has been just and without reproach. Because of this I still have a strong hope for the future, and these disasters do not terrify me as they well might do. Perhaps they may even come to an end. Our enemies have had good fortune enough, and, if any of the gods was angry with us at our setting out, by this time we have been sufficiently punished. Other men

[xiii] Job 2:9.

before us have attacked their neighbours, and, after doing what men will do, have suffered no more than what men can bear. So it is now reasonable for us to hope that the gods will [be] kinder to us—" (7.77)

LS: Ya. Well, not the gods: "the divine" again. You remember this distinction we observed in the Melian dialogue, whether he speaks of the gods or of the divine. Ya?

Student: . . . . an emendation, that is, it seems that the manuscripts said "from the god," and it seems to be an emendment that said "the divine."

LS: The trouble is, Mr. . . . that my hearing is not so very good. Now did you say there is a different relevant reading?

Student: Yes, according to the Oxford text, the manuscript reading is not "the divine," but it says, *apo tou theou* [ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ], "from the god," and that was—

LS: Oh, I see, and *theiou* [θείου] is Krüger's correction. Ya. You are right, ya, you are right. I will retract. Yes?

Reader:
"So it is now reasonable for us to hope that the gods will [be] kinder to us, since by now we deserve their pity rather than their jealousy. And—"

LS: Ya, "his envy," "his envy." Because the Athenians had *hubris* [ὕβρις] before because of their—they were so big and thought of them as so big, that was *hubris* [ὕβρις], and this caused the envy of the gods and their misfortune. And now they are brought down, are low, and the god can no longer be envious of them; and now they deserve the god's pity and so that they may still have a chance to escape. Yes?

Reader:
"And then look at yourselves; see how many first-rate hoplites you have marching together in your ranks, and do not be too much alarmed. Reflect that you yourselves, wherever you settle down, are a city already and that there is no other city in Sicily that could easily meet your attack or drive you out from any place where you establish yourselves." (7.77)

LS: Ya. Now here we have in this short passage what one can be call Nicias's theology, in contradistinction to the Athenian ambassadors, the theology of Athenian ambassadors on Melos. [2]You remember what they said: the stronger rule the weaker, and the gods are the stronger and they do with them what they want. And Nicias injects an ingredient of justice into the cause. But the question is: These alternatives do not exhaust the possibilities, but they are, as it were, the extreme opposites which Thucydides faces, and what is the end of it? What comes of his—Nicias at any rate finishes now this speech very shortly, and—

Student: It is men that make the state, not walls, or ships, or—

LS: Ya.Ya, that's clear. Ya, but that is not directly connected with the theology.

Same Student: I think it is.

LS: Ya?

Same Student: Because there is a caricature of Themistocles in this, starting with the remark made by Thucydides early in the telling, where he speaks of the army of sailors moving. And then the city is named, and Nicias speaks of the city of the men, and the city is the place of the gods and of the ancestors, but now it's grotesque, now it's—

LS: I believe it is a bit more indirect, the connection which you have in mind. Let me see. I want to mention only a few more things. That is, a few more passages which I believe are immediately relevant in chapter 79, paragraph 3, while these fightings are going on during the retreat, there also happens some natural catastrophe of a sort. Do you have that?

Reader: Yes.

LS: Read that, please.

Reader:
The Athenians charged and assaulted the wall: missiles rained down on them from the hill, which rose steeply, so that it was all the easier for those on it to be sure of hitting the target; and, finding it impossible to break through, they retreated and rested. At the same time there were some claps of thunder with some rain, as often happens when it gets near autumn, and this made the Athenians still more discouraged, for they saw in all these events omens of their own destruction. (7.79)

LS: Ya. You see here Thucydides clearly makes a distinction between the feelings and interpretation of the Athenians and his own judgment. He sees this as just a natural phenomenon of the season and has nothing to do with the desperate situation of the Athenians as such. And the situation gets worse and worse: Nicias has now given up all his hesitation and tries to get out of the fix. Chapter 85, paragraph 4. Ya, and here he says of the slaughter—it's towards the end of that chapter: "And not a small part of them also died, and this was the greatest slaughter, and in no way lesser than any of the things which happened in this Sicilian war." Do you have that, at the end of the paragraph.

Reader:
The number of prisoners taken over in a body by the state was not very large; great numbers, however, had been appropriated by their captors; in fact the whole of Sicily was full of them, there having been no fixed agreement for the surrender, as in the case of the troops of Demosthenes. Then a considerable part of the army had been killed outright, since this had been a very great slaughter—greater than any that took place in this war. Large numbers, too, had fallen in the constant attacks made on them during the march. Nevertheless, there were many who escaped, some at the time, and others, after having been enslaved, ran away afterwards. (7.85)

LS: Ya, and now in the next chapter, which is I think the last—you don't have to read the beginning. "And it so happened that the one who was most inimical to the Syracusans and Peloponnesians was Demosthenes," because of the affairs in Pylos. Do you have that?

Reader: Yes.

LS: Please.

Reader:
It so happened that one of them, Demosthenes, was Sparta's greatest enemy because of the campaign at Pylos and in the island, while the other, for the same reasons, was Sparta's best friend. For Nicias had done his utmost to secure the release of the Spartans captured on the island by persuading the Athenians to make peace. Because of this the Spartans were well-disposed towards him, and it was in this that Nicias himself had chiefly trusted when he surrendered himself to Gylippus. But some of the Syracusans who had been in contact with him were afraid, so it was said, that this fact might lead to his being examined under torture, and so bringing trouble on them at the very moment of their success. Others, particularly the Corinthians, feared that, since he was rich, he might escape by means of bribery and do them still more harm in the future. So they persuaded their allies to agree and put him to death. For these reasons or reasons very like them he was killed, a man who, of all the Hellenes in my time, least deserved to come to so miserable an end, since the whole of his life had been devoted to the study and the practice of virtue. (7.86)

LS: Ya. The last is a very ambiguous expression, "because of the whole dedication," one could almost say, "directed toward virtue." But this dedication, this devotion was *nenomismenē* [νενομισμένη], the one "prescribed by the *nomos* [νόμος], by the law."[xiv] So he was a perfectly orthodox man, and therefore he merited less than anyone else this fate. Now this is of course seen from the point of view of Nicias's theology, and in a way Nicias's end, his miserable end refutes his theology. He should have had a different fate, but he didn't have it. So if we leave it at the alternative of Nicias's theology and the theology of the Athenian ambassadors on Melos, we see that Nicias's theology is refuted, and the theology of the ambassadors on Melos is unrefuted. Nothing is said about it. Thucydides doesn't accept it, but he doesn't reject it and refute it. That, I think, is a terrible story. Now there is a last point—no, I think the last sentence of the whole book we should perhaps read, at the end of chapter 87.

Reader: Just the last sentence?

LS: Ya, I don't know how he divides the sentences.

Reader: Oh, well.
This was the greatest Hellenic action that took place during this war, and, in my opinion, the greatest action that we know of in Hellenic history—to the victors the most brilliant of successes, to the vanquished the most calamitous of defeats; for they were utterly and entirely defeated; their sufferings were on an enormous scale; their losses were, as they say, total; army, navy,

[xiv] Or, alternatively (and more plausibly), "that which was believed to be virtue," *nenomismenê* being a passive participle of *nomizein,* to hold or believe, a term cognate with *nomos* but distinct from it.

everything was destroyed, and, out of many, only few returned. So ended the events in Sicily. (7.87)

LS: Ya. So that seems to be the end of Athens, but as we shall see from book 8, when we come to that, that Athens was not defeated: she had an amazing resilience and she carried on the war for many, many more years with quite a few victories, and one of the factors working for Athens proved to be that godforsaken traitor Alcibiades. Such is what they call the irony of human life.

There is one very little point which I would like to mention, but I don't know whether I am physically able to do it, I'm sorry to say. And that is this. In the third book, chapters 29 to 30,[xv] there is that speech of the Athenian naval commander Phormion, a quoted [speech], and confronted with the speech of the Peloponnesian commanders. Now the Peloponnesian commanders encouraged their troops to fight, of course, and add *punishment* as a deterrent for those who do not fight. Phormion, the Athenian commander, does not say a word about punishment. He appeals to the patriotism and to the intelligence of his troops. Now I somehow divined, as the Greeks would say, this: that there is a connection between the punitiveness of the gods as ordinarily understood and the relative weakness of this notion among the Athenians. In the older formation, especially visible of course in the case of Sparta, these divine punishments play a very great role, but in so-called enlightened Athens play a much lesser role. And that, I think, one has to consider in order to understand Phormion's speech, which always caused me great difficulty because it's one of the very few speeches where Thucydides gives the report of the speech prior to the quotation of the speech. And then one must always say: Why does he do that? It seems to be superfluous, and Thucydides is not the most talkative of men, as we have seen. And I believe it has something to do with that. Ya. Now there is a difference of opinion or, how should I say, difference of guesses as to how many meetings we still have.

Student: Two.[xvi]

[xv] Phormion's speech is to be found at 2.89.
[xvi] The tape ends at this point.

Session 16: no date
Book 8, chapters 1-97

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —of browsing him, the seventh book of Thucydides, the seventh book is the most moving and most resplendent of the eight books, and all the greater is the contrast with book 8, which lacks surely the splendor of book 7, so one can say the most prosaic of the eight books. And there is only one book which could be conceivably be compared in this respect with book 8, and that is a part of book 5, between Brasidas's last speech in chapter 10 and the Melian dialogue. This section in book 5 between chapter 10 and the Melian dialogue is as deprived of speeches of characters, quoted speeches, as almost the whole eighth book. But this is minor. The strange thing is that when you look at the last sentence of book 8, you get the impression that book 8 is incomplete, that Thucycides was prevented by his death or something else from completing it, from completing the whole work, and therefore he couldn't supply book 8 with these grand speeches of which the other books are so rich. That is a hypothesis which is not preternatural: people may die before they finish what they are supposed to have finished, but of course Thucydides is such a remarkably reticent writer that the alternative hypothesis cannot be ruled out completely, namely, that he *deliberately* did not finish the book and [that] this strange sentence, that Tissaphernes went up from the seacoast to Ephesus to bring a sacrifice to Artemis, the sister of Apollo, was the intended end of the book. Why he should have done it, that would be a very long question. But I remind you only of the fact that Artemis was the sister of Apollo, and Apollo was the first god mentioned in the whole work, in chapter 10 or thereabouts[i]. So we leave this question open and turn to the subject matter of book 8.

Is this general question sufficiently clear? I mean, even if there is a vote of ten million in favor of this being unintentionally incompleted, and only one vote in favor of the view that it may be intentionally incomplete, that would not settle the matter according to the principles of sound scholarship. Or is the majority vote authoritative in scholarly matters? So let's leave it open, and let us turn to the very beginning of book 8. Will you be so kind to read it?

Reader:
When the news reached Athens, for a long time people would not believe it, even though they were given precise information from the very soldiers who had been present at the event and had escaped; still they thought that this total destruction was something that could not possibly be true. (8.1)

LS: Well, you must of course remember what happened there, that the Athenian armament was completely destroyed, that the mass of Athenians were in Sicilian captivity and were sent into the most unhealthy conditions in the quarries, and those who escaped earned their living, so to speak, with the more educated part of the Sicilian population by declaiming to them the passages from Euripides because there was a certain education in Sicily, and this was very powerfully described

[i] Thucydides 1.13.6.

by Thucydides.[ii] One does well to read the biography of Nicias by Plutarch, where some details are given which are not to be found in Thucydides. Yes?

Reader:
And when they did recognize the facts, they turned against the public speakers who had been in favour of the expedition, as though they themselves had not voted for it, and also became angry with the prophets and soothsayers and all who at the time had, by various methods of divination, encouraged them to believe that they would conquer Sicily.

LS: There are two classes there: the demagogues and the soothsayers, whom the *demos* regarded as responsible, but Thucydides implies that this was an unfair accusation, because why would they obey these kinds of people? Ya? Which is a point not to be neglected. Yes? Go on.

Reader:
They were feeling the stress in every department and on every front, and now, after this last blow, great indeed was the fear that beset them and the consternation. Not only was the city as a whole and the mind of every man in it weighed down by the thought of the loss of so many hoplites, cavalry, and men of military age who, they saw, could not be replaced; they saw, too, that the numbers of ships in the docks were inadequate, as was the money in the treasury, and that there were no crews for the ships. So at the moment they had little hope of being able to survive; they thought that their enemies in Sicily, after their great victory, would set sail immediately with their fleet for Piraeus, that their enemies at home would now most certainly redouble their efforts and attack them with all their might by land and sea, and that their own allies would revolt and join in the attack.

LS: So in other words, the end of the war in sight after this terrible disaster, and then a miracle happens, but not the kind of miracle the soothsayers predicted, in the sequel.

Reader:
Nevertheless, with their limited resources, it was decided that they must not give in; they would equip a fleet, getting the timber from wherever they could; they would raise money, and see that their allies, particularly Euboea, remained loyal; and in Athens itself they would take measures of economy and reform, appointing a body of experienced men to give their advice on the situation, whenever the occasion arose.

LS: Ya. Now here we must be a little bit more careful: "That they would bring into moderate, sensible shape the thrift in regard to the *polis*," namely, that which they had neglected—you remember Pericles's speech, "We love the beautiful with thrift." And then they had made this big affair without any thrift, the big expedition to Sicily. And now there should be *sophrosynē* [σωφροσύνη], moderation, which goes together with thrift rather than with dissipation . . . And there should be a rule of older men, not of these youngsters who had supported Alcibiades. Yes?

Reader:

[ii] A confusing statement, since as Strauss himself will suggest in the sentence that follows, the anecdote concerning those Athenians who saved themselves through their ability to declaim from Euripides is found not in Thucydides but in Plutarch *Life of Nicias* 29.2-4.

In fact, like all democracies, now that they were terrified, they were ready to put everything in order. Their decisions were carried out at once, and so the summer came to an end. (8.1)

LS: Ya. So in other words, Athens still has resilience left, and therefore the war lasts for many more years. This happened in 413 or thereabouts, and the war lasted for nine more years, in spite of the apparent destruction of the Athenian power. Now he says something about the reactions of the other Greeks. So the Athenians did not give in. What about the other Greeks, who were now sure that they would win the war? Next chapter.

Reader:
Next winter the whole of Hellas, after the great disaster in Sicily, turned immediately against Athens. Those who had not been allied with either side thought that, even though they were not asked, they ought not to keep out of the war any longer and should go against the Athenians of their own accord, since the Athenians, in the view of each city,[iii] would have gone against them, if they had been successful in Sicily, and at the same time they thought that the war would soon be over and that they would gain credit from taking part in it. And those who were allies of Sparta were all the more eager than before to be freed quickly from all the sufferings they had endured so long. In particular the subjects of Athens were all ready to revolt; indeed they were more ready than able, since they were incapable of taking a dispassionate view of things, and would not admit the possibility that Athens might survive the coming summer. In Sparta all this produced a mood of confidence, and what was even more encouraging was the probability that in the spring they would be joined by their allies from Sicily in great force and now with the additional advantage of the navy which they had had to build. And so, with good reasons for confidence in every direction, the Spartans determined to throw themselves into the war without any reservations, calculating that, when once it was successfully over, they would be free for the future from the kind of danger which might have beset them if Athens had added the resources of Sicily to her own, and that, when the power of Athens had been destroyed, they themselves would be left secure in the leadership of all Hellas. (8.2)

LS: Ya, this famous delusion at the end of every war, at the end of every revolution: everyone is *euelpis* [εὔελπις], is "of good hope," that one more push and we get Moscow, as the Germans thought in 1940. And the most beautiful example, I believe, is in Shakespeare's *Henry V*. Is at the end of *Henry V*: "Everything comes to an end. We only have to get rid of—" Wait, it must be *Richard III*. No, *Henry the V*.

Student: *Henry VI*.

LS: *Henry VI*!

Student: The third part.

LS: Ya. The third part, ya. And everything is fine: one more push, and there is only one little snake in the corner, called Richard III, which shows there will still be something more to do: there will never be that happy ending, the joy to end all joys.[iv] So neither the Athenian despair

[iii] In the original: "each state"
[iv] Shakespeare *Henry VI, Part 3,* act 5, scene 7.

nor the other Greeks' hopes are justified. But for moments it looks as if exactly this was the situation.

Student: There seems to be a—Mr. Strauss?

LS: Yes?

Same Student: There seems to be a drunkenness to all this.

LS: Ya, ya!

Student: The description of the Athenians going to Sicily, and then sobering and the reduction of Athens' power. The word I think is *orgôntes* [ὀργῶντες].

LS: *Orgôn* [ὀργῶν], ya. *Orgē* [ὀργή] means, the ordinary translation is "anger," but it has a broader meaning in Thucycides and it means something like "passion," in contradistinction to reason.

Same Student: Yes. And this characterizes now the other side.

LS: Ya. Ya, but in Athens also. It can also be a negative *orgē* [ὀργή], there can also be an unreasonable despair. Both were exaggerated, both did no longer take a sane view of the situation. Ya, now we cannot read the whole thing, let us look at the beginning of chapter 5.

Reader:
While both sides were in this way as actively engaged in preparing for war as they had been at the beginning, the Euboeans were the first to send—

LS: Ya. That is hard to say, whether he doesn't mean "as if the war were only now beginning"—"as if they were now beginning to wage the war," contrary to the state of affairs that Athens had been practically brought down. Yes?

Reader:
the Euboeans were the first to send representatives to Agis, during this winter, to discuss making a revolt from Athens. Agis welcomed their proposals and summoned from Sparta Alcamenes, the son of Sthenelaidas, and Melanthus— (8.5)

LS: That was the ephor[v] who had made the speech in the first assembly, you know, before the war. Ya?

Reader:
and Melanthus to take command in Euboea. These officers arrived with a force of about 300 freed helots, and Agis began to make arrangements for their crossing over. Meanwhile, however, some Lesbians arrived who also wished to revolt, and, as their claims were supported by the Boeotians, Agis was persuaded to leave Euboea alone for the time being. Instead he proceeded to

[v] Sthenelaidas (Thucydides 1.86).

organize the revolt in Lesbos, giving them Alcamenes, who was to have sailed to Euboea, as governor. The Boeotians promised ten ships and Agis another ten. All this was done without consultation with the government in Sparta, since all the time that Agis was at Decelea with his own army he had the power to send troops wherever he wished, to raise fresh forces, and to levy money. Indeed, it would be true to say that during this period the allies paid much more attention to him than to the government in Sparta, since he had his army with him and could make himself felt immediately wherever he went. (8.5)

LS: You remember Alcibiades's advice: Decelea was besieged, and the man in control was the Spartan king Agis, and he, on the spot with an army, had much more to say than the Spartan civilian government. That was the idea. And the so-called allies of Athens were naturally now full of hope to get rid of Athenian tyranny, without thinking that there might also be a Spartan tyranny; that came out only later. Ya, this was here. But Agis, although a descendant from Heracles and hence of Zeus, was not all powerful, as we see in the next paragraph.

Reader:
While he was dealing with the Lesbians, the Chians and the Erythraeans, who were also ready to revolt, applied not to Agis but to Sparta. With them came also a representative from Tissaphernes: the governor appointed by King Darius, the son of Artaxerxes, over the coastal area. Tissaphernes also supported—

LS: Ya. So you see [1]things become complicated: there is an intra-Spartan conflict between Agis and the Spartan government, and this will be aggravated by an intra-Persian conflict between Tissaphernes and another satrap or governor general, called Pharnabazus, of whom he will speak in the sequel. Yes?

Reader:
Tissaphernes also supported the idea of Spartan intervention and promised to maintain their army. He had recently been asked by the King to produce the tribute from his province, and he was short of funds,[vi] since he had not been able to raise it from the Hellenic cities because of the Athenians. He thought, therefore, that by damaging the Athenians he would be more likely to get the tribute and would also bring Sparta into alliance with the King, and so, as the King had commanded him, either take alive or put to death Amorges, the bastard son of Pissuthnes, who was leading a revolt in Caria.

Thus the Chians and Tissaphernes were acting— (8.5)

LS: And so on. So you see there are no unitary fronts of the Greeks on the one hand and of the Persians on the other, but there are conflicts within both, and which makes the situation more interesting, and more promising for the Athenians, of course. Yes. Well, we have seen—there is a little point which we might mention in chapter 6, the end of chapter 6, when he comes to speak to Melanchridas, who was the admiral of the Spartans. The end of chapter 6.

Reader:

[vi] Warner has: "for which he was in arrears."

Their first intention was to send ten of these ships themselves, with their admiral Melanchridas. Later, however, there was an earthquake, and instead of Melanchridas they sent Chalcideus, and instead of the ten ships they only equipped five in Laconia.

LS: Ya. A case where an earthquake renders impossible a Spartan military operation, not for technical reasons, but because an earthquake was taken to be an omen of ill augury. But altogether he makes clear in the sequel in chapter 8 that the Peloponnesians underestimate Athens' still remaining naval power. So we have by no means reached the end of the war. Let us turn to chapter 11, paragraph 3. Now where is that? It is in the last third, where Agis sends a Spartiate called Thermon. Do you have that?

Reader: Yes.
Agis also, when he heard the news, sent them a regular Spartan officer called Thermon. The Spartans had had the first news of the sailing of the fleet from the Isthmus, since Alcamenes had been instructed by the ephors to send off a horseman as soon as this took place, and their intention was to send out immediately their own five ships under the command of Chalcideus, accompanied by Alcibiades. But now, when they were all set for this operation, the news came of the fleet having taken refuge in Spiraeum— (8.11)

LS: And so on. Here is Alcibiades: suddenly he appears. That is not the first mention of it; he had already been mentioned in chapter 6, but he comes in as it were surreptitiously and moves very soon to the center of the stage, and this is the second mention. Now the key point, the key event which happens is that the island of Chios defects from Athens, a very rich island, and that's a very severe blow to Athens. But that is not so simple, because the Athenians are on their guard. Now we come again to Alcibiades in chapter 17, at the beginning of the chapter.

Reader:
Chalcideus and Alcibiades had driven Strombichides into Samos. Then, after arming the crews of the ships from the Peloponnese and leaving them at Chios, they recruited rowers from Chios to take their places and, manning twenty other ships as well, set sail for Miletus to start a revolt there. Alcibiades, who was on good terms with the leading people in Miletus, wanted to bring the city over before the ships from the Peloponnese arrived and so, by organizing revolt in as many cities as possible with the aid of the Chian forces and of Chalcideus, gain all the credit for the Chians and himself and Chalcideus and, as he had promised, for Endius, who had sent the expedition out. So for most of their voyage they escaped observation and started the revolt in Miletus, arriving there a little before Strombichides and Thrasicles, who had just come from Athens with twelve ships and who had joined in the pursuit. The Athenians sailed up close on their heels with nineteen ships and, as the people of Miletus would not receive them, took up their position at Lade, the island off Miletus. Directly after the revolt of Miletus the first alliance between the King of Persia and the Spartans was concluded by Tissaphernes and Chalcideus. It was as follows— (8.17)

Should I read that?

LS: We don't have to read that. Only one point. But the amazing change through Alcibiades's enormous dexterity and versatility. Now an alliance between Athens and the Persian King

against Sparta is effected. Amazing! And here we see something. We don't have to read that speech, but it claims to be a literal quotation. It claims to have the status of one of these Thucydidean speeches in which not Thucycides, but some man or body of men other than Thucycides, speak. There are a few of these treaties in book 8, more than elsewhere. They are the book 8 substitutes for Thucydidean speeches. I believe I explained that last time that these are the equivalents on the political plane of Thucydidean speeches. A Thucydidean speech is a speech made by an individual or a group of ambassadors from a particular point of view, say, Athenian, Spartan, Persian. And here these treaties are also from a particular point of view, say, here Persia–Athens vs. Sparta, but not from one particular setting, say, Athens, or Sparta or Persia, but a number, two of them. And so they approach the impartiality, as I called it, of Thucycides's own *logos*. That is, I believe, a partial explanation [for] why we do not have speeches, so many speeches here in this book as we have in the other books. Yes?

Student: Mr. Strauss.

LS: Ya?

Same Student: Then what would be the further significance of treaties replacing speeches?

LS: A treaty is a speech, isn't it?

Same Student: Yeah.

LS: I mean, a very simple point—

Same Student: I mean, these legal agreements as opposed to deliberative arguments.

LS: Ya, but the merely deliberate arguments are not conclusive, and a treaty is not necessarily performed. But if it is performed, it becomes a deed. Well, you see it so beautifully every day in the daily papers: What do these treaties in South Vietnam mean? Can you depend on them? Question. In a few years we will know, maybe earlier. But at any rate, in the context of Thucydides's literary technique, I think the treaties are in between speeches of Thucydidean speakers and Thucydides's own *logos*. They are less partial than, say, a speech by Pericles or by Cleon, whoever it was, and yet more partial than Thucydides's own speech, because they are said from a certain point of view and do not take in the whole war, whereas Thucydides's speech, the whole book, takes in the whole war.

There was another point which I thought we should mention, which is not really important. In chapter 19 there is a mention of a temple of Zeus. I mention this only in passing because we looked for the gods. It is here only a designation of a locality, but still.

Student: I would like to ask a question about this treaty. In the first two treaties that the Spartans make with the Persians, in both cases they concede Ionia to the Persians.

LS: Ya.

Student: Which seems very odd in the context of policy. They always try to justify themselves—

LS: Liberation.

Same Student: Liberation. And here, without a word . . . or without any qualification they simply are willing to concede to the Persians all of Ionia, it seems. Is there any indication why this is the case?

LS: No, but can we not use our own heads?

Student: Is that it? Are we to conclude from that that the Spartans were willing to do that?

LS: I beg your pardon?

Same Student: Can we conclude that the Spartans were willing to give Ionia over?

LS: Oh, sure! No, the Spartans were as immoral as you could wish. But the Athenians had the excuse, I believe, that they were in such an *extremely* difficult situation that they had no choice. Whereas the Spartans—there was later on in 387, I think, the so-called King's Peace, alias the Peace of Antalcidas, where all the Greek cities, Sparta and Athens, make peace with the Persian king and leaving him the whole of Asia Minor, in other words, all [that] he possessed prior to the Persian War. One must not overestimate the patriotism of the Greeks. There were some who were very patriotic, like the Spartan Lichas, who's mentioned a few times,[vii] but on the whole that was so like, say, Germany, southern Germany especially, in the time of the Rhenian Confederacy under Napoleon.[viii] Everyone looked first for his own self-interest. You know? I mean, a considerable amount of hypocrisy was always around.

Same Student: I had thought that it was . . . only that Thucydides seems to pass over this with no mention as if, you know, it could mean as if, you know . . .

LS: Ya, but—

Same Student: was so natural that—

LS: But if someone is here at your throat, you want to get the hand off your throat in the first place, and later on you negotiate. And that is, I think, what the Athenians tried to do. And surely Alcibiades, who fought for his very life, cannot be expected to have been particularly delicate.

Same Student: He . . . the Spartans are the ones who . . . not the Athenians . . . In number 18 . . . the Spartans won't be in such desperate straits.

LS: Ya. Ya, I see this first. That is true, the first . . . has changed. And this of course is a good excuse for the Athenians to respond in kind later on. Ya? You are right. Now later on things

[vii] Notably at Thucydides 8.52.
[viii] Confederation of the Rhine, 1806-13.

become more complicated, in chapter 21. There is a rising of the *demos* against the powerful, and the *demos* in Samos is of course pro-Athenian, and then he describes in the sequel some Athenian successes against that island of Chios in chapter 24. We might read there, second half of chapter 24. That's an important sentence for understanding the whole work.

Reader:
Indeed, after the Spartans, the Chians are the only people I know of that kept their heads in prosperity and who, as their city increased in power, increased also their own measures for its security.

LS: You see? So the Spartans are at the top, from this point of view. They are sober in good fortune. That's a great achievement. But the next ones were the Chians. Yes?

Reader:
One may think that this result revolt was an example of overconfidence—

LS: Namely, because they made the revolt against Athens at a time when the Athenians were still strong, and therefore the Chians were defeated. He refers to that. Yes?

Reader:
but they never ventured upon it until they had many good allies ready to share the risk with them and until they saw that, after the disaster in Sicily, not even the Athenians themselves were any longer pretending that their affairs were not in a really desperate state.

LS: So in other words, an error of judgment does not bespeak *hybris* [ὕβρις] or overconfidence. It was a sober judgment at the time. Athens was down, Chios had good allies, it was a safe risk which they took, and yet it was a risk, as the facts show. Go on.

Reader:
And if, incalculable as is the life of man, they made a mistake, there were many others who thought, like them, that Athens was on the point of collapse, who came also to realize their error. Now, cut off from the sea and ravaged by land, there were some among them who aimed at bringing the city over to the Athenians. The authorities were aware of this, but took no action themselves. Instead they brought in the admiral Astyochus from—

LS: Admiral means of the Spartan army. Yes?

Reader:
the admiral Astyochus from Erythrae with four ships which were with him, and considered how they could put a stop to the conspiracy with the least possible disturbance, either by taking hostages or by some other method.

LS: Ya. So we have here a first inkling of—he didn't have such strong statements about the Greeks as a whole, that the Chians were so high up: lower than the Spartans, but still very high up. And it will become clear later on, I do not know now where, why the Chians were so sensible, because sensibility requires an explanation, at least in political affairs.

Reader: I think it's in chapter 40. I think—

LS: Where?

Reader: Where the sentence is almost the same: "there were many slaves in Chios."

LS: Ya, good. All right. Then let us postpone it until we come there. Now then there comes the account of the fighting against Miletus, and Alcibiades still working together with Tissaphernes, the Persian satrap, against Pharnabazus, the other Persian satrap. If you have such big empires, you have inner great divisions, of course, as you see in our age, too. This infighting, I believe it is now called, plays a considerable role towards the end of the war. Now in chapter 27 we make the acquaintance of a remarkable Athenian called Phrynichus. Let us read chapter 27.

Reader:
Phrynichus, the Athenian commander, had received accurate information from Leros about the enemy fleet and, though his colleagues were in favour of staying where they were and fighting a decisive battle at sea, he said that he personally would not do so and he would, to the best of his ability, prevent them or anyone else from doing so either. He added that whenever afterwards they might have an opportunity to fight, knowing exactly what the numbers of the enemy were and what they had to put against him, with all their preparations made fully and in their own time, he would never risk battle against reason through fear of being told it was disgraceful not to do so. There was nothing disgraceful in the idea of an Athenian fleet withdrawing on the right occasion; what would be much more disgraceful in every way would be to be defeated, and for Athens to fall not only into disgrace but into extreme danger. After the disasters that had happened to her she was scarcely in the position, unless it were absolutely necessary, to take the offensive at all, even with a really strong force; certainly there could be no justification for her to run into danger of her own choice and when there was no question of compulsion. He told them to take on board as quickly as possible the wounded and the troops and the equipment they had brought with them, to leave behind everything that they had taken from the enemy's country, so as to lighten the ships, to sail to Samos, and, when once all their ships were brought together there, to use that as a base for offensive action at the right time. These were his views, and on these views he acted. (8.27)

LS: So in other words, a sensible man. Where does he stand politically in the intra-Athenian fighting? That will come out in the sequel. And now a conflict—hitherto we have seen a conflict between Tissaphernes and the Spartans, now it comes to a conflict between Tissaphernes and the Athenians regarding the payment for the sailors. That's in chapter 29. Yes?

Reader:
Next winter, when Tissaphernes had seen to the garrisoning of Iasus he went on to Miletus, and, as he had promised at Sparta, gave a month's pay to all the ships at the rate of an Attic drachma a day for each man. He proposed paying only three obols for the future, until he had consulted the King, but would, he said, pay the full drachma if that was the King's wish. Hermocrates, the Syracusan commander, protested against this; no stand was made about the pay by Therimenes, who was not an admiral, and was merely sailing with the fleet to hand it over to Astyochus. An

agreement was reached by which an extra sum equal to five ships' pay was to be given, in addition to the three obols a day for each man. For fifty-five ships Tissaphernes was paying thirty talents a month, and to the rest, above that number, the payment was in the same proportion.

LS: Let us see how this goes on, here, in chapter 36. We have to omit a lot. "About the same time, when Astyochus came to Miletus."

Reader:
It was about this time that Astyochus came to the fleet at Miletus. The Peloponnesians still had plenty of everything in their camp. Pay was adequate, and the soldiers still had left the large sums of money looted from Iasus. The Milesians, too, showed themselves ready and willing to support the war. The Peloponnesians, however, were still not satisfied with the first agreement with Tissaphernes, made by Chalcideus. They thought that Tissaphernes was getting more from it than they were, and, while Therimenes was still there, they made another agreement, which was as follows— (8.36)

LS: So there comes another literally quoted contract, a treaty, in the next chapter, which we don't have to read. The consideration, the same consideration which applied to the earlier treaty applies to this, the substitute for a speech. And now there begin the intra-Spartan intrigues in chapter 39. Might we read the beginning of that?

Reader:
In the same winter the twenty-seven ships which had been equipped by the Spartans for Pharnabazus after the negotiations carried out by the Megarian Calligeitus and the Cyzicene Timagoras put to sea from the Peloponnese and set sail for Ionia at about the time of the solstice. They were commanded by Antisthenes, a Spartan of the officer class. With him the Spartans also sent out eleven other regular officers to act as advisers to Astyochus. One of these was Lichas, the son of Arcesilaus. Their instructions were that, on reaching Miletus, they should be jointly responsible for managing affairs in general in the most efficient way; that, if they thought it wise, they were to send out a fleet consisting of the ships they had with them or of a greater or smaller number of ships to the Hellespont to Pharnabazus; and, if the eleven agreed, they were to dismiss Astyochus from his naval command and appoint Antisthenes in place of him. This was because Astyochus was considered suspect as a result of the letters sent by Pedaritus. They sailed from Malea across from— (8.39)

LS: We don't have to read that. At any rate, you see there are intra-Spartan infighting, which complicates matters still more. So one doesn't know . . . where exactly one stands, and this of course improves the situation of the neutrals, and the super-neutral is naturally Alcibiades. All this infighting, for which he is not responsible but which he can exploit, acts to his advantage. And so in chapters 43 to chapter 44 there comes[2] the final conflict between the patriotic Spartan Lichas and the Persian satrap Tissaphernes. That's a point, a believe, you had in mind all the time, in 43, paragraph 2, where they all were—[ix]

Reader:

[ix] There is a break in the tape at this point. The audio recording resumes with the reading.

To Tissaphernes Alcibiades also gave advice not to be in too much of a hurry to end the war and not to consent to bring in the Phoenician fleet which he was equipping or to take more Hellenes into his pay; the result of this would be to give the control of both land and sea to one Power, whereas it was better to have the two parties each in possession of its own separate sphere of influence, so that if the King had trouble with one of them, he would always be able to call in the other against it. (8.46)

LS: In other words, perpetuate the conflict between Athens and Sparta: that is to the benefit of the Persian King. If the Spartans don't behave, support the Athenians; and if the Athenians don't behave, support the Spartans. And then you are sitting pretty. So, amazing. Yes?

Reader:
If, on the other hand, one city[x] were to gain control of both the land and the sea, the King would be at a loss where to find allies to help to undermine its supremacy, unless he was prepared in the end to come forward himself and, at the cost of great expense and great danger, fight it out to the finish. It was more economical to let the Hellenes wear each other out among themselves while the King incurred only a fraction of the expense and none of the risk. Alcibiades said also that he would find that the Athenians were the better people with whom to share power: they were not so ambitious to acquire an empire on land, and both their policy and their actions in the war fitted in best with the King's interests, since an alliance with the Athenians would be on the basis of conquering the sea for Athens and conquering for the King those Hellenes who lived in the King's territory, whereas the Spartans, on the other hand, had come as liberators and it was hardly likely that, after liberating Hellenes from their fellow Hellenes, they would not also free them from subjugation to foreigners, unless the King could get rid of them first. Alcibiades therefore recommended him first to wear both sides out and then, after weakening the power of Athens as much as possible, to get the Peloponnesians out of the country at once. Tissaphernes on the whole agreed with this policy, or appears to have done so, judging from his actions. He took Alcibiades into his confidence on the strength of his having given such good advice on these subjects; he was niggardly about providing the pay for the Peloponnesians and he opposed the idea of their fighting a battle at sea; instead he pretended that the Phoenician ships were coming and that they could then fight with all the advantages on their side. Thus he did them a lot of harm and caused a decline in the morale and efficiency of their navy, which had been very great. Altogether, in a manner too obvious to be mistaken, he showed an unreadiness to help them in the war. (8.46)

LS: Ya. So it is now clear, I think, Alcibiades's policy. The first big treason of his fatherland to Sparta, followed by the treason of the whole of Greece, the betrayal of the whole of Greece to Persia. Now the question is: How will he get out of that fix? That is the subject of the sequel, but not completely described by Thucydides because he breaks off earlier, either accidentally, because he died, or intentionally, because he didn't wish to tell the whole story and left it to Xenophon to complete it.

Here now the thing becomes of course complicated, because the sailors or soldiers in Samos, the Athenians, are democratic. And the government in Athens is no longer democratic, and that complicates matters, and that is pursued in the sequel. Alcibiades makes clear to Tissaphernes

[x] Warner has "State."

that a sound policy for Athens and an agreement with Persia requires the dissolution of democracy in Athens: you can't expect the Persian king to trust a democracy, and therefore you have to change the regime in Athens, and this will be done. That is said in chapter 47. Phrynichus, who has been mentioned before, opposes that because he's opposed to the gentlemen who want to establish an oligarchy. Chapter 48. Now let us turn to chapter 49. Unfortunately, we cannot read the whole. Chapter 49?

Reader:
However, the members of the party who were present at the meeting did not alter their ideas. They adopted the programme put before them and prepared to send Pisander and others as their representatives to Athens, where they were to negotiate for the recall of Alcibiades and for getting rid of the democracy, and to make Tissaphernes the friend of the Athenians.

LS: So you see now they see it is necessary to recall Alcibiades in order to get Tissaphernes on their side. The little price to be paid is the abrogation of democracy. After all, that is less important than the destruction of Athens. Ya?

Reader:
Phrynichus now saw that a proposal would be made to recall Alcibiades and that the Athenians would agree to do so. Considering the way he had opposed this in his speech, he was afraid that if Alcibiades did get back he would make him suffer for having tried to prevent it. He therefore adopted the following scheme. He sent a secret message to Astyochus, the Spartan admiral, who at that time was still in the neighbourhood of Miletus, and told him that Alcibiades was betraying the Spartan interest by making Tissaphernes the friend of the Athenians. His letter also contained a clear account of all other matters, and there was a plea that his own action, in plotting against a personal enemy even at the cost of his country's interests, should be understood. (8.50)

LS: You see? Great moral freedom. Ya? Personal safety comes first. Go on.

Reader:
Astyochus, however, never thought of taking action against Alcibiades, who, in fact, now no longer came within his reach as he had done. Instead he went up from the coast to see him and Tissaphernes at Magnesia, told them the contents of the letter from Samos, and turned informer himself. It was said, indeed, that in order to make money for himself he had sold his services to Tissaphernes, offering to share his information both on this subject and on all others; and this was why he dealt so weakly with the question of the pay not being produced in full.

Alcibiades at once sent a letter to the authorities in Samos accusing Phrynichus for what he had done and asking that he should be put to death. Phrynichus was now thoroughly disturbed, and found himself in very great danger indeed as a result of the information laid against him. He wrote again to Astyochus, protesting against his failure to keep secret the contents of his first letter, and said that he was now prepared to give them the chance of destroying the whole Athenian force in Samos; he wrote down detailed instructions as to how he should act, Samos being unfortified, and declared that, since his life was in danger for their sakes, no one could now blame him for doing this or anything else to escape being destroyed by his greatest enemies.

This information also was passed on by Astyochus to Alcibiades. Phrynichus, however, was told in time that Astyochus was betraying his confidence and that a letter on the subject could be expected any moment from Alcibiades. He therefore got in first with the news and informed the army that, Samos being unfortified as it was and the whole fleet not being at anchor in the harbour, the enemy was going to make an attack on the camp; he said that he was quite sure of this and that they ought to fortify Samos as quickly as possible and generally be on the alert. As he was in command himself, he had the power to see that all this was done. The Athenians set to work at the fortifications and so, as a result of all this, Samos, which would have been fortified in any case was fortified all the sooner. (8.50-51)

LS: We forgot to read the chapter to which you drew our attention, in which it is explained why the Chians were such sensible people. Can you read that chapter? This is, I believe, indispensible.

Reader:
There were many slaves in Chios—more, in fact, than in any other city except Sparta; they were also, because of their number, punished particularly severely when they did wrong; and now, when it appeared that the Athenian army was firmly established behind fortifications, most of them immediately deserted and went over to the Athenians, and, because of their knowledge of the country, it was these who did the most harm. (8.40)

LS: Ya.

Reader: Should I go on?

LS: No, I think that is what we need. So in other words, the Chians had a premium on peaceful conduct because in the war they were endangered by the multitude of their slaves, just as the Spartans were endangered by the multitude of the helots. That is a great premium on peaceful conduct if a war doesn't pay, and even is the opposite of pay. And so in other words, there is no ground for admiration of the high morals of the Chians or the Spartans, but sober judgment, just as he did at the very beginning, when he said regarding the Trojan War that the other Greek princes didn't follow Agamemnon because of the oath of Tyndareus but because Agamemnon was the strongest king. And it was coercion, not gratitude or oath, which induced them to follow Agamemnon. [The] same spirit directs this interpretation.

There are quite a few more passages—we cannot read them all today, but I think in order to have something like a conclusion of the argument, we should read two more passages towards the end of the book, and then see how far we can come. Let us turn to chapter 96. Yes?

Reader:
When the news of what had happened in Euboea came to Athens, it caused the very greatest panic that had ever been known there. Not the disaster in Sicily, though it had seemed great enough at the time, nor any other had ever had so terrifying an effect. And indeed there was every reason for despondency: the army at Samos was in revolt; they had no more ships, and no more crews for ships; there was civil disturbance among themselves, and no one could tell when it might not come to actual fighting; and now, on top of everything, this disaster in which they

had lost their fleet, and, what was worst of all, Euboea, which had been more useful to them than Attica itself. And what disturbed them most greatly and most nearly was the thought that the enemy, after their victory, might venture to come straight on at them and to sail against Piraeus, which was now left with no navy to defend it; indeed, they expected every moment to see them coming. And, if the Peloponnesians had been more daring, they could easily have done this. They would then either have produced, simply by anchoring off the city, still greater dissension inside, or, if they stayed there and undertook siege operations, they would have forced the fleet in Ionia, however hostile it might be to the oligarchy, to come to the help of their own people and of the city itself; and meanwhile the Hellespont and Ionia would have fallen into their hands, together with the islands and everything as far as Euboea—the whole Athenian empire, in fact. However, on this occasion, as on many others, the Spartans proved to be quite the most remarkably helpful enemies that the Athenians could have had. For Athens, particularly as a naval power, was enormously helped by the very great difference in the national characters—her speed as against their slowness, her enterprise as against their lack of initiative. This was shown by the Syracusans, who were most like the Athenians in character and fought best against them.

LS: Ya, that links up with the very beginning. You remember the confrontation of the Athenian and Spartan character in the first Corinthian speech? It's shown up to the very end that the Athenian *daring* and energy, as we say, was the greatest asset. Ya. Now the next chapter, please.

Reader:
When they got the news, the Athenians, in spite of everything, manned twenty ships. They also summoned immediately the first of a number of assemblies. The assembly met in the—

LS: So called Pnyx, ya?

Reader:
Pnyx, where they used to meet before. The Four Hundred were deposed and it was voted that—

LS: The Four Hundred, that was the peak of the iceberg, meaning that they were the actual rulers, but officially there were only five thousand citizens, those who had a certain property qualification. But the government was in fact in the hands of four hundred, an oligarchy. Ya?

Reader:
The Four Hundred were deposed and it was voted that power should be handed over to the Five Thousand, who were to include all who could provide themselves with a hoplite's equipment, and that no one, on pain of being put under a curse, was to receive any remuneration for the holding of any office. (8.97)

LS: So that was what was technically called, by Aristotle especially, a polity, meaning a democracy on the basis of property qualification, what they called in France in the early nineteenth century the *pays legal*, the country according to law, meaning those who have nothing have nothing to say, because those who can equip themselves must have a certain amount of property, naturally. Yes?

Reader:

A number of other assemblies were held later, at which legal advisers were chosen and all the other steps taken for drawing up the constitution. Indeed, during the first period of this new regime the Athenians appear to have had a better government than ever before, at least in my time. There was a reasonable and moderate blending of the few and the many, and it was this, in the first place, that made it possible for the city to recover from the bad state into which her affairs had fallen. They also voted for the recall of Alcibiades and of others with him, and sent to him and to the army at Samos urging them to take their full part in the war. (8.97)

LS: Ya. That is an amazing statement for this book. Not Athens under Pericles, but Athens under the Five Thousand as reorganized was the best regime. That it didn't last very long, that is not an argument against it, according to Thucydides, because the principle underlying the whole thing was much more sensible. In Pericles's case, the stability depended entirely on the survival of a single man, Pericles. Here there was a large group of five thousand, the people who counted in the city, who were in control. And very rarely does Thucydides speak up so much, and that is one reason which inclines me to believe that the book *is* finished, that this crucial judgment occurs here towards the end. We moderns read Thucydides with the prejudice that the Periclean age was the apogee of Athens and therefore this was Thucydides's own judgment. That is not true. That Pericles was as an individual a greater individual than the people connected with these five thousand or four hundred, that may very well be the case, but this was not Thucydides's judgment, nor was Thucydides impressed by the so-called successful Athenian imperialism under Pericles as much as we were. That was the reason why we have this in other respects strange sympathy for Sparta, because Sparta had stability, and stability required the presence of a ruling stratum, however corrupt it may be in other respects, as distinguished from the outstanding individuals by which Athens distinguished herself: Themistocles, Pericles, Alcibiades. And Alcibiades gets even a good note, because he is—this sensible regime is the one which calls him back. I thought we should at least under no circumstances disregard these passages. Yes?

Student: I am somewhat confused. I thought it was Alcibiades's policy to put down the democracy, but this seems to be a return to a democracy.

LS: But polity is not democracy. If you have a proper—

Same Student: It's a mixture of democracy and—

LS: Ya, ya, that's all, just as the mixture of coffee and milk is not pure coffee. You know? You can also take drugs if you don't want coffee.

Student: But he says, this may be important, since in the democracy in its pure form there was no voting as we think of it but all selections by—except for certain restricted categories, selection by lot.

LS: Ya. And what is the word which he uses here? Which is the word? It's *Epsēphisanto* [ἐψηφίσαντο]. That's a *psēphisma* [ψήφισμα] Ya, the two technical terms are either *kyameuein* [κγαμεύειν], that is from the bean [*kyamos*, κύαμος], and that is the word for lot, or *cheirotonein* [χειροτονεῖν], by raising the hand. These are clear expressions: by raising the hands, you vote for the individual, and therefore you make distinctions between meritorious and nonmeritorious

individuals, and that's a nondemocratic principle. And the lot is the strictly democratic because it doesn't make a distinction between men of merit and men of no merit. And here that is left open, but surely this was not, it is clearly said, and in . . . that this was not democratic. But it contained a democratic ingredient because of the large number of citizens, of people who had a right to vote. Well, we wouldn't call it very democratic, but they did.

Student: Mr. Strauss?

LS: Yes?

Same Student: There's an interesting sentence in chapter 48 about Alcibiades, maybe not so startling, but Thucydides's judgment at any rate comes out. He says, when talking about—well, let me read it.

LS: Where in chapter 48? It's a long chapter.

Same Student: About the first, about twenty lines into the chapter. He says, "He believed, quite correctly"—talking about Phrynichus, "He believed, quite correctly, that oligarchy and democracy were all one to Alcibiades and that what he was really after was to get recalled by his friends and come back to Athens as a result of a change in the existing constitution." I don't know whether that means he believed, whether oligarchy and democracy were all one to Alcibiades at every time, or whether just in this particular—

LS: No, I think that is true, they were all. But he had also the notion that a certain combination of the two would be particularly conducive to his, Alcibiades's, interest in the situation, as proved to be the case by the vote of which we have just read. Surely an amazing book. And oh, yes, there is one thing which I forgot, of the utmost importance in my opinion. Let me see whether I can find it. In chapter 53.

Student: Are you pointing to the Greek of the oligarchy and the democracy were all one to Alcibiades?

LS: Ya.

Same Student: The text is that Alcibiades did not *prefer* one to the other.

LS: Ya.

Same Student: He had no more desire for one than for the other.

LS: Ya, sure.

Same Student: Does that mean that he identified with . . .

LS: No, that's clear he wanted to be the boss. Sure. But what was more conducive to his being the boss, that depended on circumstance. But let us turn to chapter 53, at the end of chapter 52.

Reader: Read the end of chapter 52?

LS: Ya. "And Alcibiades."

Reader:
Alcibiades, therefore, with so much to gain or lose by his efforts, was constantly in touch with Tissaphernes, and did everything he could to bring him round.

And now Pisander and the other representatives of the Athenians sent out from Samos reached Athens and spoke in front of the people, giving them a general idea of their programme and pointing out in particular that if they recalled Alcibiades and if they changed the democratic constitution, it would be possible for them to have the King as their ally and to win the war against the Peloponnesians. Much opposition was expressed with regard to altering the democracy; there was a great outcry from the enemies of Alcibiades at the idea of his being brought back from exile in a manner which involved breaking the law; and the priestly families of the Eumolpidae and the Ceryces lodged their protests on behalf of the mysteries—which had been the reason for his banishment— (8.53)

LS: So in other words, it would be an impious act, not only illegal and not only unconstitutional, but in addition impious, to call him back after what he was suspected of. Yes?

Reader:
Pisander then came forward in the face of a great deal of violent opposition and, taking separately each one of those who had spoken against his proposals, asked him the following question: 'Now that the Peloponnesians have as many ships as we have ready to fight us at sea, now that they have more cities as their allies, and now that the King and Tissaphernes are supplying them with money, while ours is all gone, have you any hope that Athens can survive unless someone can persuade the King to change sides and come over to us?' When they replied that they had not, he then spoke straight out and said to them: 'Well, then, that is impossible unless we have a more integrated form of government—'"

LS: Ya, that is bad. "Unless we lead our political life in a more moderate, sensible way, *sôphronesteron* [σωφρόνεστερον], "more restrained" —and that is always a favorite term of the oligarchs against the *madness* of the demos. Ya?

Reader:
"'with the power in fewer hands, so that the King may trust us. At the moment what we have to think about is our survival, not the form of our constitution. (We can always change that later, if we do not like it.) And we must bring Alcibiades back, because he is the only person now living who can arrange this for us.'" (8.53)

LS: So Peisandros has changed sides, smelling the wind and turning in the right direction toward a less democratic order. And this word *sôphrosynē* [σωφροσύνη], which is such a key word in Greek and especially Thucydides, comes up here. You know that Alcibiades took care of *sôphrosynē* [σωφροσύνη] in the navy by reducing the pay of the sailors, and the Athenians must

altogether be brought back to *sôphrosynē* [σωφροσύνη] by a more restricted regime. Now what's the interesting thing here, I believe, is this (I don't know whether you have become aware of it): there is a speech of Peisandros, and which is first given in indirect speech, and then in the middle of it the author turns into direct speech. That's the only direct speech in the eighth book, these few sentences, as part of a speech which as a whole is given in indirect speech. I don't believe that this is a mere accident. It is a reminder to us of the peculiar character of the eighth book, the speechless book with reminders of the books with speeches, the other reminders being the treaties, which were also literally quoted, and where it is not of the slightest interest to me, I confess, whether the archeologists find inscriptions which contain the texts of these treaties and by which one can correct Thucydides's formulation, because Thucydides was not a modern scientific historian. He was after bigger game.

Well, we meet, God willing, a week from today for the last time. For reasons of superstition, I say in this present academic year, and then we'll then have a kind of . . . Is this all right with you? Is there any point you would like to raise before we finish? Mr. Berns?

Mr. Berns: It's a very big point, though, and that is, you have indicated that you think the speechless character of the last book is intentional.

LS: Possibly.

Mr. Berns: Possibly, or that you suspected it, but you—have you said anything about why it would be appropriate for the last book?

LS: Ya, but if you have—

Mr. Berns: to become more speechless . . .

LS: You have doubtless in the course of your readings come across an expression: climax and anti-climax. And he wanted to end anti-climactically. There could be no greater climax than book 7, and compared with that, book 8 is definitely anti-climactic—I mean, these intrigues, which could very well appear to be petty, and not to say squalid, compared to these terrific events in Sicily. And to use another example, for the same reason for which Homer does not describe the destruction of Troy, there are things which go beyond description. Just as Homer doesn't describe the beauty of Helen and only lets us see the old men looking at her from the wall and say: "Well, even we old guys understand that people kill one another for that woman," that is *logou kreissôn* [λόγου κρείσσων], "stronger than speech," "surpassing speech." That was always used as an example for Homer's art, that he avoided that pitfall in not giving an anatomic description of Helen.[xi] Well, gentlemen, ladies, until next week.

[xi] The reference is to *Iliad* 3.144-148, where rather than describe Helen's beauty directly Homer relates the impact of her appearance on a group of Trojan elders.

Session 17: no date
Book 7, chapters 47-86; book 8, chapter 45

Leo Strauss: [In progress] —that the just belligerents had a greater chance to win than the unjust belligerents, and vice versa. And this presupposes, of course, that there are powers in the world which watch over justice and injustice, at least in such big affairs as war and peace, and in plain English that means that there are gods concerned with justice. That, we can say, that is a Spartan belief, as distinguished from the belief of those upper class Athenians of whom we saw some specimens in Melos, in the Melian dialogue. The interesting point is this: Thucydides ascribes this belief to the Spartans shortly before he had given us the letter from Nicias. There is no reference to Nicias here, but there is a god, an implicit reference to Nicias. Nicias can be presumed to have held the same view, as a kind of continuation of the letter of Nicias. Nicias was an Athenian, of course, an Athenian gentleman with a hard Spartan turn of mind, and that is the connection. I mean, I use this as an example in order to show how all these things I think are interwoven in Thucydides. Is there any point you would like to raise in this connection? Mr. Berns?

Mr. Berns: Is there ever any—well, are there passages that indicate that the Athenians as a whole ever were under the sway of the kind of feelings that . . . Spartans . . . . Are you suggesting that perhaps Nicias himself was with the whole Sicilian project?

LS: No, you know he opposed it.

Mr. Berns: Yeah.

LS: And the only thing he could do, by his not very dexterous tactics in the assembly, was to make the expedition as sure of success as possible, because he was a competent general, and he was an hitherto always lucky general, and last but not least, his name—Nicias, derived from the Greek work *nikē* [νίκη], which means "victory," so a victory-promising name, and there was enough of such superstition in Athens.[i] No, no, Nicias didn't want the expedition, but he wanted—his dream was to go with the expedition to Sicily, show the flag, and return. So then the Athenians were satisfied that the attempt had been made and no harm could come of it, and he would be remembered as the always lucky Nicias. But his shrewd advice as to the armament showed the Athenians that the combination Nicias–Alcibiades would be unbeatable. [Alcibiades][ii] would bring the energy, courage, daring, and Nicias would bring the necessary caution, and then Alcibiades availed himself of this opportunity.

Mr. Kaplan: Mr. Strauss, why should we think that . . . the injustice which is watched over by gods, why should we see these things that *hybris* [ὕβρις] . . . and *hybris* [ὕβρις] is revenged. In other words, what I am speaking now is not watching gods but a kind of balance . . . in human affairs.

[i] There is no basis in Thucydides's text for this last surmise.
[ii] Strauss says "Nicias" and then corrects himself.

LS: Yes, it is possible that something of this kind, namely, that moderation is as a rule the wise policy. But what are the limits of moderation? Well, it is easy to say that Napoleon, for example, did not take into consideration these limitations, but he was driven from one goal to the other. The same was of course also true of Hitler. And here Thucydides's opinion is that Pericles said: "If you limit yourself to a strictly defensive policy, self-defend your empire, and don't go out for other adventures, the Spartans can never defeat you. You are in the fortunate position of an island, though you live in fact on the continent, Athens is a harbor, a big harbor and can lead a naval war and no one can do anything against it." But nevertheless she disregarded those counsels of moderation, but then Thucydides adds: Even if, in spite of that, they might have won the war if there had not been that rivalry among Pericles's successors. And what the immediate context suggests is that they wanted to be, each of them wanted to be the first man and offered the populace more and more splendid goals than his rivals. But that is not the full story. There is also, as we have seen first in the fate of Demosthenes and still more fully in the fate of Alcibiades, there also was this *envy* among the leading men. An Athenian general could not afford to be defeated without being accused of being bribed by the enemy in order . . . and therefore they had always to look over their shoulders, which doesn't always improve the efficiency of the general. And I drew your attention to that chapter in Machiavelli, his *Discourses*, book 1, chapter 27 to 28 or thereabouts,[iii] why the Romans, who were in this respect very sensible and did not punish their generals for defeats, made it much easier for them to concentrate on the conduct of the war than the Athenians did.

Now in the case of Alcibiades, no one knows whether Alcibiades had anything whatever to do with the mutilation of the Hermae and the divulging of the Mysteries. No one knows, and Thucydides doesn't say a word about it. But because he was so unusual a man, and very conscious of his gifts and probably also not completely free from a certain arrogance, [he] had many enemies, and they accused him of trying to put down the democracy and trying to become the tyrant, as you know, and so they recalled him from the expedition [and] drove him into exile. And Alcibiades didn't take it lying down: he went over to the Spartans, gave the Spartans the most important Athenian state secrets, and contributed more than anybody else to the failure of the war. That he was clever enough to remedy the harm he had done to his city, that is not yet here in the eighth book, and that is another story. But surely the root of the evil were these anti-Alcibidean demagogues, who did not consider that after Athens had decided to make the Sicilian expedition under Alcibiades's martial leadership, one must give him the benefit of the doubt and leave him the opportunity to win the war. So if there was *hybris* [ὕβρις], it was not merely the *hybris* of Alcibiades, it was more directly the *hybris* of the enemies of Alcibiades, that they believed that they could do what Alcibiades couldn't do.

Mr. Kaplan: Yes, I understood this, but I meant why . . . the gods . . .

LS: Well, if there is a kind of order favoring moderation, it is not difficult to "quote personify unquote" let's say, this moderating power is popularly called the gods.

Mrs. Kaplan: When you read this passage closely, it looks to me that he shows what is . . . He mentions this.

[iii] Machiavelli *Discourses* 1.31.

LS: Ya. Ya, sure.

Mrs. Kaplan: . . . in Athens at that time . . . So there is the idea of moderation: moderation is talking about this . . . in other words, talking about what is . . . and so on. So I think there is definitely an idea of what is so many phrases here . . . because they didn't talk. They talk . . . the whole book is full of speeches—

LS: But I have another objection to what Mrs. Kaplan said, and that is this: Pericles doesn't speak of moderation. The word is never used by him. Never used by him. And he even indicates that the rule of Athens is a kind of tyrannical rule. He accepts that. And in this statement here, in chapter 18, the word unjustice occurs, so it is not only—after all, you can have very moderate goals, rounding off your territory a little bit, "*une petite rectification de la frontière*," as Napoleon III called it, which is not immoderate but it may very well be an unjust action because you take away from another people what belongs to it. So it is I think an additional reason why one should think of the gods.

Mrs. Kaplan: But there is, there is a difference. Moderation may be . . .

LS: Ya, sure. Sure.

Mrs. Kaplan: . . . . is by no means doing something on your own. . . . will always presuppose the . . . that you and your opposite is thinking and doing. So I see in this passage a rather definite idea of how the passage comes from Thucydides, definite idea of his what was lacking. Lacking was application talking at certain moments with Spartans on what and how. And this . . . even better to say not what is meant here: not moderation but . . .

LS: Ya, but still—but the key word, I think, is justice or injustice.

Mrs. Kaplan: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah—that is definite . . . was the principle of . . .

LS: I mean, otherwise, ya. You're quite right.

Mrs. Kaplan: Has to be, has to be.

LS: In other words, you are quite right. Just as aggression is not as such unjust …

Mrs. Kaplan: . . .

LS: Melos?

Mrs. Kaplan: . . . . how it would be done, what is just, what is not just, and how can be, how can be resolved, this is the point, or the same idea . . . I don't want to say only . . . The point is don't go to wars, to violence without talking.

LS: Not quite. What he says is a power like Athens, which is a saturated power, which has in the main what she wants, should not engage in further adventures and should try to preserve what

she has. Now it is not easy to preserve what she has because there are other states who want to be free from the Athenian hegemony, and they prepare a war against Athens and Athens must wage that war. And the point is this: there were some conditions to which the arbitration belongs, that if there is any conflict among the people who have made that contract as to what is the right thing to do, then there should be negotiations first. And he who does not accept the principle of negotiation but goes to war directly is *clearly* in the wrong. But what comes out of—if the negotiation starts and what comes out of that, that is the . . . So there are some more passages, chapters 47 and 48 in the same book, [book] 7. Yes?

Reader: Beginning of 47?

LS: Ya.

Reader:
Meanwhile the Athenian generals discussed the situation in the light of the defeat which they had suffered and the general weakness which they observed in their army. They recognized that their efforts had been unsuccessful and they saw that the soldiers hated the idea of staying on. Many of them were ill, partly because this was the season of the year when there is most sickness, partly because the camp was situated in marshy and unhealthy ground; also the whole future looked desperate. Demosthenes therefore thought—

LS: Ya, "looked as hopeless as possible." The word "hope" and the derivatives of "hope" go through the whole seventh book. It is the whole story of hope—hope, which is by nature squandering, as . . . I think, says in one of his speeches, and yet he is the greatest hope of all. Now go on.

Reader:
Demosthenes therefore thought that they ought not to stay any longer and, in accordance with his original idea in making the venture at Epipolae, now that it had failed he voted for going away and not wasting time over it, while it was still possible to cross the sea and while they could claim a naval superiority at least with regard to the newly arrived ships. It was better for Athens, he said, for them to fight against those who were building fortifications in Attica than against the Syracusans, who could no longer be conquered easily; also it was unreasonable to stay on in front of the city spending large sums of money with nothing to show for it.

This was the view taken by Demosthenes. (7.47-48)

LS: So I think Demosthenes's view is perfectly clear and straightforward. He said: Let us make a last attempt to conquer the fortress by storm, and if we win, fine, but if we do not win, let us go home and let's give up the adventure as only a danger to Athens without any prospect of success. Now what does Nicias say?

Reader:
Nicias was quite prepared to agree that their affairs were in a bad way, but did not want the fact of their weakness to be proclaimed or to have it reported to the enemy that the Athenians in full

council were openly voting in favour of the withdrawal; for they would then find it much harder to do so secretly, when they did decide— (7.48)

LS: So Nicias thinks he cannot afford to be quite frank. Demosthenes was quite frank. Ya?

Reader:
Then, too, from his own private sources of information he still had some ground for hoping that, if they persevered with the siege, the enemy's position would become worse than their own. They would wear the Syracusans out, he hoped, through shortage of money, especially as now with the ships at their disposal they had a greater command of the sea. There was also a party in Syracuse who wanted to betray the place to the Athenians, and this party was always sending to Nicias and urging him not to give up the siege. Nicias was aware of all this and, though in fact he held back because he still could not make up his mind what course to take and was still considering the question, in the speech which he delivered openly on this occasion he refused to lead the army away. He was sure, he said, that the Athenians would not approve— (7.48)

LS: You see, his hope was greater than his fear. That will be explained in the sequel. Ya?

Reader:
They themselves could see the facts as they were and reach a decision about them without having to depend on the reports of hostile critics; but this was not the case with the voters at Athens, whose judgements would be swayed by any clever speech designed to create prejudice. He said, too, that many, in fact most of the soldiers in Sicily who were now crying out so loudly about their desperate position, would, as soon as they got to Athens, entirely change their tune and would say that the generals had been bribed to betray them and return. For his own part, therefore, knowing the Athenian character as he did—

LS: Literally, "knowing the characters of the Athenians." In earlier speeches he had said that the characters of the Athenians are difficult, and he meant precisely this: that they are so easily swayed by demagogues. Yes?

Reader:
rather than be put to death on a disgraceful charge and by an unjust verdict of the Athenians, he preferred to take his chance and, if it must be, to meet his own death himself at the hands of the enemy. (7.48)

LS: Ya, one second. There is a certain lack of correspondence or parallelism here. What is the alternative? He could be put to death unjustly by the Athenians, namely, unjustly as a traitor who had been bribed by the enemy. What is the alternative? To die justly, of course, at the hands of the enemy, of the Syracusans or Spartans. And why does he prefer the one to the other? Here we get a glimpse into Nicias's soul. He forgets something.

Student: It seems that he is concerned more about reputation.

LS: I beg your pardon?

Same Student: He is concerned more about his own reputation . . .

LS: Ya. And what about the death of Nicias and the fate of the Athenian army and navy? If his unjust death leads to the salvation of the Athenian army and navy, then he acquires a great merit about Athens. You know? You can put it this way: he's concerned more with his reputation than with the well-being of the city. That is true, but Thucydides places it all very beautifully by the lack of parallelism, as he speaks of unjust death in one case and avoids any adjective in the other case. Yes?

Reader:
And, he said, in spite of everything, the Syracusans were in a worse position than they were. Because of their payments to their mercenaries, their expenditure on fortresses in the open country, and then the maintenance, which had now lasted for a year, of a large fleet, they were already short of money and would soon not know where to turn. They had spent 2,000 talents already, and had run up large debts in addition; and if, through failing to produce the pay, they were to lose even a small portion of their present force, they would at once be in a bad way, since they depended more on mercenaries than on men who, like the Athenians, were bound to serve. He therefore said that they ought to stay where they were and go on with the siege, and not go away defeated because of money, in which they were far superior. (7.48)

LS: Ya. That is also characteristic to the wealthy Nicias, the wealthiest man in Athens. And he thinks of course of the war primarily in financial terms, as a terribly expensive, costly affair: Look at these enormous war taxes we have to pay, and the rich Syracusans feel exactly as I do and also want to end this very expensive war, so what's more natural? That is the way in which Thucydides characterizes these characters, less by his explicit statements than by showing us what they say and what they do. And this indirect way is the reason of characterization, is the reason why Hobbes called him "the most politic historiographer that ever writ,"[iv] namely, that we learn not from what the historiographer tells us about him but how the historiographer presents him in deed and speech. And here we see [that] these two things, I believe, show the side of Nicias which is hardly mentioned by Thucydides, namely, his enormous wealth, and what was the one we made first? Ya. No, this point that he *fears* the difficult characters of the Athenians: fear, and therefore: Let us not do something rash and return to Athens before it is absolutely necessary to return. But in fact his hope for a possible arrangement with Syracuse, meaning especially with the wealthy people in Syracuse, is much greater than his fear. Nicias is fooled by his hope or hopes. He was a wonderful man, a model of a citizen, a model of a general for all ordinary purposes, as shown by the whole work. But the decisive test he does not pass, for this reason. And his hope for divine help is linked somehow with his manifest hopes for human help, just as in the case of the Melians, their hope from the gods and their hope from the Spartans are fundamentally the same: the gods care as little for the Melians as the Spartans. The Spartans had every good reason to help them: they were racially kindred, their island was relatively close to Sparta; for sheer shame they should help. But Sparta's self-interest was not impaired if that little island was captured by the Athenians, the whole grown-up male population slaughtered,

[iv] Hobbes, "Of the life and history of Thucydides, in "*The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury; Now First Collected and Edited by Sir William Molesworth, Bart.,* (London: Bohn, 1839-45). 11 vols. Vol. 8., viii. Availabe online at thttps://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/hobbes-the-english-works-vol-viii-the-peloponnesian-war-part-i

and the women and children sold into slavery. This you have to bear with an easy conscience, as Churchill is said to have said that his conscience is a good girl: in the end, he always makes up with it. And so the Spartans made up with their bad conscience. Ya, I think that is a remarkable passage. Now in the sequel—I beg your pardon?

Student: I just wanted to ask . . . question of Nicias, earlier in the passage . . . Are we to take this, following to what happens to Nicias . . . moderation . . .

LS: No, the Spartans were in their way more consistent. I mean, when their self-interest was at stake they acted very ruthlessly, as they showed especially in the case of Nicias himself. The Spartans liked Nicias; he had been nice to them in the case of the prisoners of war, as you may remember. But the Syracusans were afraid that Nicias would, under torture, confess to these secret negotiations with the rich Syracusans, and that would not be desirable. And therefore they demanded Nicias's decapitation, which then took place. And Nicias was a gentleman, and the Spartans were not gentlemen. That the Spartans were gentlemen was an intra-Spartan myth, cultivated for pedagogic reasons but of no consequences as far as foreign policy was concerned. I don't know whether that's [an] answer to your question.

Same Student: Well, what then—if they were so . . . their concern for justice, for their strong concern whether they acted justly or unjustly in the debate . . .

LS: Ya, well, if it was expedient to be just, by all means, let us be just. But if it is too costly to be just, then let us consider our interests. I believe that is not only the Spartans who think in that way. Pardon?

Same Student: Then that qualifies their . . .

LS: Ya, well, it all depends. I mean, for example, how can you maintain the most fundamental institutions of Spartan society, of *any* society, without what is now called, or since Roman times called religion? Think of incest, think even of homosexuality, and so on. You know? There are some—*murder*! Some support, some superhuman, transhuman support for these prohibitions was always regarded as indispensible, and the Spartans knew that very well. And when Pausanias misbehaved so grossly by betraying Greece to the Persians, the Delphian god interfered and said: Yes, he must be executed, but he must be executed in a nice way because he is a king, a descendant of Heracles, the son of Zeus, and then you can't treat him as you would Mussolini or someone of this kind. You know? I don't know whether you are dissatisfied, Mr. . . .

Student: Well, when . . . that concerning the treaties they were very, the Spartans were very concerned whether or not they acted justly, whether in the first case whether they had broken treaty, in the second case whether the Athenians had broken the treaty, so that—

LS: Ya.

Student: their concern with that was linked to their belief that the justice or injustice of their cause mattered a great deal.

LS: Ya, well, but you see, in politics things are somewhat complicated. And Archidamus was of the view that there was no *casus belli*, no just cause of war, where in these critical negotiations . . . The rather savage effort, Sthenelaidas said: *Casus belli* is there, let's begin the war. And at that time, the majority of the Spartans were in favor of the war. And then the war lasted a number of years, and ended in Pylos, let us say, this part of the . . . Now this showed that it was not so simple, that somehow Apollo had dissent in that matter, and therefore they said: We made a mistake. Now after the Athenians are *clearly* the aggressors, and in addition, after we have Syracuse as our ally, which of the two motives, the moral or the purely technical military one, was more important? Thucydides does not claim to be able to decide, because *no one* can decide it. I believe he has made it as clear as necessary the complication and the changes in the situation.

Now let us see, there are some more passages here. Ya. Now in the immediate sequel, I believe it is in the immediate sequel—no, it's not here. At any rate, what follows next is that Nicias's proposal against immediate departure wins out. Nicias wins, he is commander in chief, after all. But then something unexpected happens which works for Nicias: an eclipse of the moon. And now then of course that is a demonic event, and then we have to bring in the soothsayers, and the soothsayers say: We may not even deliberate about departure or nondeparture before three times nine days have passed. That means, in plain English, twenty-seven days, and in the meantime the situation of the Athenians deteriorates of course still further. If Alcibiades had been in control, he would have found ways of interpreting the oracles in a way which was militarily defensible, but Nicias didn't see it; and we don't know, and Thucydides doesn't tell us, what was decisive in Nicias's soul: the advice of the soothsayers or his hope that the wealthy Syracusans might give in. It is very hard to say and I think also a good lesson in contemporary politics, when one sometimes thinks the situation is so clear that every child can see who did what wrong, and to be a little bit careful and wait how things develop. There are some more things. I would like to make also a remark to chapters 10, following of the same book, [book 7].

Mr. Kaplan: Which chapter?

Student: Chapter 10.

LS: 10, following. Ya, we cannot read the whole thing. These are long speeches. Oh, this is it. That is the letter of Nicias, it's the letter of Nicias. Now we can say that book 7 as a whole, in the language of Greek dramatists or dramaturgists, brings the *peripeteia* [περιπέτεια]. What is the usual English translation? Peripety?

Student: Peripety or reversal of fortune.[v]

LS: Ya. Here most massively the leadership shifts from the Athenian gentleman Nicias, with his hard Spartan turn of mind, to the much more daring Spartan commander Gylippus and the equally daring Syracusan commander Hermocrates. The Athenian situation becomes grave. Nicias's letter, of which we have spoken before—and this I think we must keep in mind, that book 7 brings the *peripeteia* [περιπέτεια]. First in the very simple terms known to you from

[v] Aristotle *Poetics* 52a22-b3.

every tragedy, that somone on the height of good luck comes down into the abyss of misery, but it can also be used in a somewhat more subtle or ironical way, as we will see.

Let us then turn to chapter 76, following. We cannot of course read the whole, it is unfortunately impossible. Now he describes the misery of the Athenians after the decisive naval defeat, and then when the whole army is destroyed in a way which surpasses description. Here in chapter 76 to 77, Nicias's speech is quoted. Let us read chapter 77.

Reader:
"Athenians and allies, even now we must still hope on. You have been saved from worse straits than these before now. And you must not reproach yourselves too much for the disasters of the past or for your present undeserved sufferings. I myself am physically no stronger than any one among you (in fact you see what my illness has done to me), nor, I think, can anyone be considered to have been more blessed by fortune than I have been in my private life and in other respects—

LS: Ya, "in my private life," meaning so wealthy, "and in other respects," as a general, as a political man. Yes?

Reader:
"but I am now plunged into the same perils as the meanest man here. Yet throughout my life I have worshipped the gods as I ought, and my conduct towards men has been just and without reproach.[vi] Because of this I still have a strong hope for the future, and these disasters do not terrify me as they well might do. Perhaps they may even come to an end. Our enemies have had good fortune enough, and, if any of the gods was angry with us at our setting out, by this time we have been sufficiently punished. Other men before us have attacked their neighbours, and, after doing what men will do, have suffered no more than what men can bear. So it is now reasonable for us to hope that the gods will be kinder to us, since by now we deserve their pity rather than their jealousy."

LS: Yes?

Reader:
"And then look at yourselves; see how many first-rate hoplites you have marching together in your ranks, and do not be too much alarmed. Reflect that you yourselves, wherever you settle down, are a city already and that there is no other city in Sicily that could easily meet your attack or drive you out from any place where you establish yourselves." (7.77)

Mrs. Kaplan: Mr. Strauss . . . what it means that "you are city, a city already." It is the number of their . . .

LS: I beg your pardon? Ya—I mean, acoustically.

[vi] There is a long break in the tape at this point. The portion of the passage missing from the audiofile has been supplied from the translation.

Mrs. Kaplan: Acoustically, ya. What does it mean, this sentence? I mean the fact that you yourselves, whatever yourselves, thou art a city already. What it means: in numbers, or?

LS: In numbers and in—

Mrs. Kaplan: or this establishing where the Athenians are and . . .

LS: Ya, you are a city, you are numerous enough, you have artisans of all various kinds which you need in order to form a city, you can settle down somewhere, and they will also find women.

Mrs. Kaplan: But in law, well, I remember the beginning of *Laws*, of Plato's *Laws* where people . . . they don't make decisions . . .

LS: Ya, but they can no longer return by sea to Athens, their navy is destroyed. But they can go into the interior of Sicily, and in the interior of Sicily there are people who don't like the Syracusans: the indigenous old Sicilians are not Greeks, for example. And so they will get the wherewithal to live, food, other supplies, of course.

Mrs. Kaplan: And maybe a law, maybe the feeling of . . .

LS: Sure, they need a law. Sure they need—

Mrs. Kaplan: . . . settlement . . .

LS: Sure, they need laws, and need magistrates—

Mrs. Kaplan: . . .

LS: No, no, no, no, no—

Mrs. Kaplan: This is very interesting, this . . .

LS: Ya, sure!

Mrs. Kaplan: assurance, feeling of Athenians . . . that everywhere, if you have sufficient number . . .

LS: Ya, not everywhere, but Sicily is sufficiently large to permit that.

Mrs. Kaplan: Yes, but it is not only geographical . . . it sounds very proud . . .

LS: Ya, it is not—again, it is not hopeless: Even if the worst comes to the worst, we still can found a city, and perhaps the Athenians will send a new navy, which will bring us home. That he doesn't say. At any rate, now we must read together with this immediately the end of this section, that is the end of chapter 86, after he has spoken of Nicias's execution. The very last sentence.

Reader:
For these reasons or reasons very like them he was killed, a man who, of all the Hellenes in my time, least deserved to come to so miserable an end, since the whole of his life had been devoted to the study and the practice of virtue. (7.86)

LS: Ya, "had been devoted to the practice of virtue as understood by the *nomos* [νόμος]," I would translate it.

Mr. Kaplan: . . .

LS: Pardon?

Mr. Kaplan: I have somewhere written up, "what is considered virtue." I don't know from where.

LS: Ya, that's the same, *nenomismenē* (νενομισμένη from *nomos* [νόμος). In other words, he was a very respectable man, and virtuous in the sense of respectable, and there is no doubt about that. And he hadn't deserved it, meaning the just thing would have been that he would *not* have been executed but have returned to Athens as a respected man. Nicias's fate is a refutation of his theology. If his theology were right, or the Spartan theology we have spoken of before, this could not have happened to Nicias. But it is not right, and therefore we are confronted with the question which we discussed briefly last time. Since there are these two polar theologies here in Thucydides, the Nicias theology or the Spartan theology on the one extreme, and the theology of the Athenian ambassadors on Melos on the other: Where does Thucydides stand? We can surely say he did not believe what Nicias believed, and he surely doesn't say that he agrees with the Athenian ambassadors at Melos. Somewhere in between. Whether this in-between position can still be called a theology—that was Mr. Kaplan's . . . that's another matter. But in the, how should I say, in the easy-going way in which we usually speak about these matters, we can say it was a kind of theology. At least you could express it in theological terms, where the gods are, as it were, symbols of moderate conduct.

Student: Of what?

LS: Of moderate conduct.

Student: Mr. Strauss?

LS: Ya?

Same Student: You said at one time that—in speaking about the same matter that there was no clear evidence for the existence of gods but a great deal of evidence for the *need* for gods.

LS: Did I? Well, I think it was not an absolutely absurd assertion.

Same Student: No, but is that what you mean in trying to get at Thucydides's own view?

LS: No.

Same Student: The need for gods as opposed to—

LS: No, but I would say Thucydides is one of a number of men who would confirm me if I had such a view. Ya? As you know, in former times people believed there are two sources of the knowledge of god. The first is reason. And the demonstrations of the existence of god play a great role at least since the time of Socrates and Plato. And then the other was what is in our tradition called revelation, and what you can call also tradition, and today I believe people call it myth. And whether this latter source is the source of knowledge was of course always controversial. Today, at any rate, both possible sources, reason and revelation, no longer command that adherence they have commanded not only for centuries but for millennia, and that causes our predicament. Does this make sense?

Same Student: I don't quite understand why the two—what has replaced the adherence to either of the two.

LS: There is a very crude and almost obscene word, and therefore I hesitate to use it: atheism. Atheism. Have you ever heard that word? And atheism may be based on denial of revealed religion, and it may be based on denial of rational religion, and on the denial of both. Did you ever hear of a man called Freud, *The Future of a Delusion*, which is a very popular statement of this view, or for that matter Marx, *Communist Manifesto*?[vii] And if you look more closely, you would also find people like Feuerbach,[viii] a teacher of Marx, and many more, and all these people who make this fuss on the campuses, even speaking today, as I was told, of a theology without God. Have you ever heard that? That there are such—

Same Student: I've heard the expression, but it doesn't mean much.

LS: Ya, I was present when they had the discussion in Chicago—at eight o'clock in the morning, a very ominous time for someone like me—and a man, a *theologian* spoke up in favor of theology without God, and there was a somewhat witty literary historian present. He said that sounds to him as a geography without the earth, which I thought was not the worst thing one could say. No, these things exist, and I believe one does not understand our situation, the situation of men in our time and in the foreseeable future, if one does not take this fact into consideration. But I believe the most important man in this respect whom one has to read and to think about if one wants to find one's way is *Nietzsche*. Nietzsche was surely not the first atheist, but Nietzsche was the first man who saw that atheism means very, very great misery, who, being an atheist, said that. And when Nietzsche says "God is dead" and makes his Zarathustra say it, he means that is, *at least* to begin with, the most terrible thing which ever happened to man or which man ever did to himself. Whether it could lead to something good or even better, as he also sometimes thought, that was less certain for him than the first thing. So I think that instead

[vii] Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* [Die Zukunft einer Illusion] (1927); Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848).
[viii] Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), German philosopher and historian of philosophy, author of *The Essence of Christianity* (1841).

of reading Freud and Marx, it would be better to read Nietzsche, at least it would be more helpful.

Mr. Kaplan: More beautiful, too.

LS: Useful?

Mr. Kaplan: More beautiful and useful.

LS: Ya, ya. Oh, yes, he was a better writer. Yes?

Student: I don't know whether you want to answer a general question at this point, but you also made a remark at an earlier class, that in comparison with Plato and Aristotle, Thucydides saw something that they . . . the role the gods play . . . that this is inadequately expressed by Plato and Aristotle in comparison to Thucydides. Is that, did you mean that as . . . the superiority of Thucydides in that respect? Does . . . understand the question . . .

LS: No, that is a very important question which you raise, but it is for this very reason also not easy to answer. I mean, when you come, say, from your knowledge which you have acquired through living for some years in the world, and reading newspapers and so on, talking to politically interested and informed people, [and] you turn to Thucydides, I think you recognize the phenomena of which he speaks almost immediately. Whether you agree with Thucydides's judgments on various things is another matter, but these are things which were there, and with relatively superficial modifications are still there in the same way. But when you turn to Plato and Aristotle, you come into a different world! The best regime of which they both speak, Plato and Aristotle, has never existed, as they admit, and it will never exist, as they imply. What is the use of that for someone who wants to have decent political order? Thucydides doesn't raise the question. Thucydides does not go beyond saying that a certain regime in Athens, which lasted about seven months, the five thousand or four hundred, was the best regime which Athens had during his lifetime. Well, what kind of best regime is that, which lasts only for half a year? Not Pericles—that was an accident . . . strange.

I give you another example, not political. When you try to see what are the highest principles of which Thucydides thinks and of which he speaks in speaking of war and peace, of everything, you come to something which he calls motion and rest. Peace is the most outstanding example, motion. And war most outstanding example of—well, you understood me even if I expressed myself badly. Ya, can you leave it with motion and rest? And Plato makes an enumeration of the highest principles in the dialogue called *Sophist*—he has in there being and non-being, identity and difference, and also motion and rest—it is at least somewhat more complete, and he discusses it. Thucydides does not discuss it; at the most he illustrates it. So in the language which we have inherited, one can of course say, and everyone says that, that Plato and Aristotle were philosophers and Thucydides was *only a historian*. But somehow this answer doesn't satisfy, because that distinction as made, for example, by Aristotle, meant that the historian is a rather low-class collector of facts, who does useful work by collecting the facts, but [is] not a really thinking being. Now this may be true of most historians, but it is surely not true of Thucydides. How shall we call such a thinking man as Thucydides? The word "historian" somehow is not

satisfactory, and there are other reasons why one should think a bit about what one means when one talks of history, and I believe that is one very good reason for reading and rereading Thucydides: to get a better understanding of that phenomenon which is so crucial for the modern world, because all these men I mentioned before in answer to your question, they all can be said to have wrestled with the problem of history. And this is at the bottom of their so-called atheism, because belief in gods meant, at least in the biblical and in the Greek tradition, the belief in sempiternal, deathless beings, i.e., beings beyond any possible history. And the belief in history as *the* all-comprehensive horizon within which everything takes place, which is of any interest to man, that is for all practical purposes the meaning of historicism, of the belief in the ultimately decisive character of history. But that again is a very long story. Mr. Berns?

Mr. Berns: It's too late for Thucydides as philosophical historian.

LS: Ya, it is a kind of, how shall I say, to avoid the difficulty of an opposition by—how do you say this, an iron—? What is the expression one usually uses in order to ridicule a contradictory expression? I'm sorry, I don't remember it. A very common expression.

Mr. Berns: . . .

LS: No, no. A very common, unphilosophic, unscientific expression—

Student: . . .

LS: for something which—for something self-contradictory.[ix]

Mrs. Kaplan: Mr. Strauss, last time you mentioned the writing of the treaty which Thucydides brings . . . I would not give anything, I am not interested, I don't quote you, but whether it is really so or whether it is Thucydides whose interpretation—

LS: Oh, ya. No, he composed it.

Mrs. Kaplan: Well, is . . . it was quite clear that you . . . and second, is this your argument, I mean, this is not personal . . . history, whether it was . . . and critical understanding of history in modern times. Because if it is history we will always ask: Was it so or was it not so?

LS: Yes!

Mrs. Kaplan: . . .

LS: But there are so many strata in that thing called history that the presentation can be perfectly true and *absolutely* shallow, and another one may contain a lot of factual errors but may go straight to the root of the matter, and therefore it is being instructive. What would you prefer?

Mrs. Kaplan: Depends on as you were saying, mainly errors of fact. If the Russian Revolution would be presented what people . . . would be presented with all facts which we know how it

[ix] A brief inaudible exchange between Strauss and Mr. Berns follows.

happened . . . in big lies, of many things which we done, I would prefer, in *this* history, would be included all facts and small facts, and book of conquest of the Russian . . . should be a history of Russian people of fifty years. Now I understand that this book, strangely enough, is very systematical. It is from the beginning till the very end, keeps to the . . . to the, to the tactic: what this war, or from this—

LS: Absolutely.

Mrs. Kaplan: Absolutely. From this year to this year, in this geographical connections, of this people. In this way it makes really impression of tremendously accurate, tremendously accurate in style, I would say. Now my question . . . now my question is why you don't, why you don't give a second . . . whether it was this way—

LS: Very much so, but it is a very long question, and we have discussed it in another connection. For example, when we raise the question: Who were the first people who used the wheel? The Bible would say, "X was the inventor of the wheel."[x] X, I don't know. Another person would say, "*As far as we know*, X was the inventor of the wheel." And that is the difference. And that is the whole principle of critical history. I mean, everything else follows that.

Let me tell you one more thing, and then one more passage with which I must conclude. But what was the thing I wanted to tell you? Oh, yes! By some accident I have read again, in an hour where I was wholly unnable to read anything difficult, Plutarch's biography of Cicero, and this—I mean, he has great respect for Cicero as a writer, of course, but thinks he was an impossible man as a statesman, and his overall judgment on Cicero as a statesman is *identical* with the judgment of Theodor Mommsen, the most famous Roman historian of the nineteenth century. So that confirmed me in my belief [that] maybe it still is possible to find out facts about history. If Plutarch and Mommsen[xi] can agree—

Mrs. Kaplan: Except, except, Mr. Strauss, that Mommsen, in the nineteenth century, very, very scientific German historical—

LS: And Plutarch was not a scientist.

Mrs. Kaplan: Plutarch no, but Mommsen.

LS: Sure, ya, but Plutarch, but that they can agree.

Mrs. Kaplan: Mommsen agrees because he's so . . .

LS: No, no, no, no, no.

Mrs. Kaplan: No?

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[x] The Bible makes no mention of the invention of the wheel.

[xi] Theodor Mommsen (1817-1903), German writer, classicist, historian, author of the multi-volume *The History of Rome* (1854). He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1902.

LS: There is no inference. There is no inference. That is the point. So I would like to conclude our meeting today, and the whole course, with a passage of which we have spoken last time, in book 8, chapter 45, where he speaks about a remarkable deed of Alcibiades. We have read it, but read it again.[xii]

Reader: The whole chapter?

LS: No, not the whole chapter, but the first part.

Reader:
At this time, and even earlier, before they moved to Rhodes, the following intrigues were going on. After the death of Chalcideus and the battle at Miletus, Alcibiades became suspect to the Peloponnesians, and a letter was sent by them from Sparta to Astyochus with orders to put him to death. He was a personal enemy of Agis and was generally considered unreliable.

LS: Namely, Alcibiades, and Agis was the Spartan king. Ya?

Reader:
In his alarm Alcibiades first sought refuge with Tissaphernes and then used his influence with him to do all the harm he possibly could to the cause of the Peloponnesians.

LS: Whom he had helped so enormously against Athens shortly before. And you see, he was versatile. Yes?

Reader:
He became his teacher[xiii] in everything, and it was he who cut down the rate—

LS: Ya, he became the teacher of this high Persian official, the teacher for everything. Now of what in particular?

Reader:
and it was he who cut down the rate of pay so that, instead of an Attic drachma, only three obols a day were offered, and even that not regularly. He told Tissaphernes to say to the Peloponnesians that the Athenians had had longer experience than they had in running a navy and only gave their own men three obols a day, not so much because they could not afford more, as in order to prevent their sailors getting out of hand through having too much and either impairing their fitness by spending money on the kind of things which lead to bad health or deserting their ships, as they might do, if they were not leaving behind arrears of pay as a security for their proper conduct. (8.45)

LS: And so on. So the thing into which sailors come when they get such high pay is called *hybrizein* [ὑβρίζειν], "committing acts of hubris." And I suppose what you know from the daily papers about what drunken sailors do makes unnecessary any commentary on my part. So when Alcibiades is a teacher of Tissaphernes, of the Persians, in everything, he is in particular a

[xii] In session 16, the audio cut off between chapters 43 and 46, so 45 appears here for the first time.
[xiii] Warner has "adviser."

teacher of the opposite of hubris, which is moderation, *sôphrosyunê* [σωφροσύνη], or you can also say *egkrateia* [ἐγκράτεια], "self-restraint." Alcibiades transforming himself in the course of his very—his life rich in changes, from the man who had the greatest *hybris* [ὕβρις] in Athens into a teacher of the opposite of *hybris* [ὕβρις]. This, I believe, is the most extraordinary *peripeteia* [περιπέτεια] described by Thucydides.

Now I don't know whether you remember that: when Thucydides tells this beautiful story of Kylon in the first book and the troubles between the Athenians and Spartans in connection with that, Thucydides—an old commentator says about this passage, "Here," in describing this, "the lion laughed."[xiv] The lion is of course Thucydides, who is always so stern and severe, and this is—as this commentator saw, here he cannot have remained completely severe: he had to laugh. That is true, but I will say this story of Alcibiades as a teacher of moderation and self-restraint is still much more beautiful and more proper for a lion to laugh about than the story of Kylon.

Student: The story of what? I didn't hear.

LS: Kylon. K-y-l-o-n. That was the fellow who tried to become a tyrant of Athens and was then dragged from an altar, the right of asylum was disregarded, impiety and so on. Ya. This, I believe, is really his hubris—Alcibiades's hubris was famous. And, for example, in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, there he is briefly characterized from a hostile point of view: his hubris is in the center of the negative qualities.[xv] And we have seen [that] a man who did what he did, as described by Thucydides, cannot have been free from this vice.

Mr. Kaplan: Mr. Strauss, does Machiavelli mention Alcibiades?[1]

LS: I don't know at the moment, but as Socrates used to say, nothing like having another look at it. Take a translation, like that of Walker, or maybe even—who is, who did the translation, Detmold, I believe, in the Modern Library, and look up the index of names.[xvi]

Mr. Kaplan: I am asking the question simply because shouldn't this be . . . sometimes this way . . .

LS: Ya, sure, but there are differences. It's simply a disgrace that I do not know it, but I don't know it. But as I say, nothing easier than to answer that question. Ya. Well, I can only wish you a profitable and pleasant summer vacation, and I hope you have something equally useful and pleasant to read during the summer as we had in this course.

Mr. Kaplan: We wish you the same.[2]

LS: Thank you very much.[3]

[xiv] The commentator was an anonymous Hellenistic critic called a Scholiast.
[xv] Xenophon *Memorabilia* 1.2.12.
[xvi] Machiavelli mentions Thucydides at *Discourses* 3.16 and *Art of War* 3.214, Alcibiades in the first of these passages and at *Art of War* 7.121. (The second reference to Alcibiades follows not Thucydides but the Roman military writer Frontinus.)

Session 1

[1] Deleted “which”
[2] Deleted “in”
[3] Deleted “this convention is”
[4] Deleted “was.”
[5] Deleted “new.”
[6] Deleted “—it”
[7] Deleted “the Corcyreans send”
[8] Deleted “this is not”
[9] Deleted “And this is”
[10] Deleted “for the Corcyraeans”
[11] Deleted “which”
[12] Deleted “who take”
[13] Deleted “Thucydides thinks”

Session 2

[1] Deleted “he uses here”
[2] Deleted “And that is what the Athenians call—”
[3] Deleted “this.”
[4] Deleted “what is”
[5] Deleted “No, they”

Session 3

[1] Deleted “One of these regicides—no”

Session 4

[2] Deleted “is simply”
[1] Deleted “it is not much”
[2] Deleted “you would give”
[3] Deleted “and we will next”

Session 5

[1] Deleted “Plataea should—no, whether”
[1] Deleted “and”
[2] Deleted “Here there was—”
[3] Deleted [Student] Yeah, yeah
[Strauss] Pardon?
[Student] Yeah.

Session 6

[1] Deleted “that”

Session 7

[2] Deleted “also said”

Session 8

[1] Deleted “when, for example”
[3] Deleted “and that is—to which we have”
[1] Deleted “and not only.”

Session 9

[1] Deleted “sooths.”
[2] Deleted “who has examined”
[3] Deleted **Reader:** Perhaps you should say that we don’t meet for the next . . .
LS: Oh, ya! Next Wednesday, and the Wednesday following—

Session 10

[1] Deleted “of.”
[2] Deleted “his.”
[3] Deleted “in which”
[1] Deleted “Thucydides—I’m sorry”
[2] Deleted “[Strauss] Pardon?
[Mr. Berns] ”Greek tragedy.”

Session 11

[3] Deleted “no”

Session 12

Deleted [Strauss] Pardon?

[Male Student] Franciscans.

[Strauss] The Christian brothers?

[Student] Franciscans.

[Strauss] Oh, the Franciscans.

Deleted: [2] **Reader:** “The position in Sicily as far as my information goes, as I have said. Indeed it is even easier than that since we shall also have a number of non-Hellenic peoples, who, through hatred of the Syracusans will join us in the attack on them. And as for the position at home, if you look at it in the right way, you will see that there is nothing here to hinder us. They talk about the enemies we shall leave behind us if we sail, but our fathers left behind them these same enemies when they had the Persians on their hands as well, and so founded the empire relying solely on their superiority in sea-power. The Peloponnesians have never had so little hope of success against us as they have now. True enough that, if they really had the confidence, they have the strength to invade us by land, but they could do this whether we sail to Sicily or not. They can do us no harm at all with their fleet, since we shall be leaving behind us a fleet of our own quite capable of dealing with theirs.

“There seems to be, therefore, no reasonable argument to induce us to hold back ourselves or to justify any excuse to our allies in Sicily for not helping them. We have sworn to help them, and it is our duty to help them, without raising the objection that we have had no help from them ourselves.’”

Oh, I'm sorry, I'm reading Alcibiades's speech again. I apologize. I'll start again on page 380, chapter 20. I thought there was something wrong, but I couldn't—

LS: Ya.

Session 13

[3] Deleted "than."
[1] Deleted "was not"
[2] Deleted "**LS:** Pardon? **Mr. Berns:** Just on the "Preface" of the *Phenomenology*."

[3] Deleted "And I do not know, I have no notion how long this, this semester takes.
[Male Student] Three more weeks; I think.
[Strauss] I beg your pardon?
[Male Student] Three more weeks.
[Strauss] Oh, then we might be able to read the whole—Book Seven and Book Eight. That would be very good."

Session 14

[1] Deleted "but therefore"

Session 15

[2] Deleted "now they"

Session 16

[1] Deleted "we see now an intra—

Session 17

[2] Deleted "to."
[1] Deleted LS: Pardon?
Mr. Kaplan: Does Machiavelli mention Alcibiades?
[Strauss] Whether who mentions Alcibiades?
[Rob] Machiavelli.
[Mr. Kaplan] Machiavelli.

[2] Deleted [Strauss] Pardon?
[Mr. Kaplan] We wish you the same.
[Rob] He wishes you the same.

[3] Deleted [Rob, Mr. Kaplan, Mrs. Kaplan] We, we--all of us.
[Strauss] Thanks, thanks!
[to Rob] Do you know what that is?
[Rob] No, do you?